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# REAL ADVENTURE

SELECTED BY  
E W PARKER, MC

EDITED BY  
W. T. HUTCHINS, M.A.

7

*With line drawings by  
Winifred Townshend and others*

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## PREFACE

IN this collection of narratives of personal adventure, an attempt has been made to select accounts which will be recognized as the "real thing" by anyone who has encountered similar perils. Just now when historical dramas, cinema films and biographies are adding colour and romance to our picture of the "good old days," we are apt to forget that our own age has been singularly prodigal in finding tasks for the stout-hearted.

Such exploits are in themselves an incentive for the men of to-day and to-morrow, and the records which the survivors have preserved are a heritage likely to stand the test of time better than many current literary successes. The crystal-clear pictures, photographed in the mind of the observer in moments of strain and danger, have the power to transport us to the scene of action itself. It is this power of taking us into a new world beyond our own imagining that the narrative of real adventure shares with the greatest creative literature.

E.W.P.

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## ROUNDING THE HORN

WE were off the pitch of the Horn on the tenth of the month, and the weight of the wind rose to hurricane force. All through the previous night we had run with only lower tops'ls set; the coming of the sullen dawn brought no cessation in the wind, which still rose and rose in blinding, unfaceable hail-squalls. In the forenoon the fore tops'l was taken in and the only canvas left spread was the slender strip of the main lower tops'l. We goose-winged that soon after, taking turn after turn of ratlin-line round the bunt, to keep all firm, and leaving only the fins of the clews yet spread to the gale. Few square feet of canvas as were left, it was all the barque could stagger under. Bare poles would have been enough \*

Strange it was to look aloft and see the reeling spars gleam yellow and naked against the leaden sky. In place of the sheeted tiers we were accustomed to, nothing but the wet gleam of painted steel and the tensely-drawn lines of unquivering cordage. Fore and aft no stitch of canvas except those rigid, straining triangles at the main. To the hail-whipped fury of the squalls it seemed that



## REAL ADVENTURE

bare steel and wire itself could hardly stand. The sea was a moving mountain-range of water; a broken expanse of green and white, running true as though laid by line, and with unfaltering swing. Half the world seemed to heave up as we shouldered some league-long crest; not a cable's length could we see when the squalls swooped down. In the height of the blasts the crests of the rollers were blown headlong in a flurry of spindrift that hung like a mist.

There was no chance to wear or heave-to. To have brought her broadside on, if only for a moment, to those mighty following seas would have meant instant destruction. Like the Alexandrian sail of old, the ship "was caught, and could not bear up into the wind." There was no alternative but to let her drive.

Only our best steersmen were allowed at the wheel. Another man was stationed to leeward to bear a hand with the spokes. The old man never moved far away from the helm. The remainder of us were gathered on the fore part of the poop. There was nothing we could do while the gear held. The main deck was a seething whirlpool swept by endless tons of green water, that made a dash for'ard a matter of life and death.

There was no galley fire, and the steward remained perforce in his pantry under the poop. He managed to boil some water on the mate's oil-stove

## ROUNDING THE HORN

and we had a drink of tea apiece at mid-day, with a sea-biscuit and a handful of bully-beef. *X* *turn*

*2210* So the day wore on. Drenched to the skin and strained almost to breaking-point through standing up against that living wall of wind, I thought the end of the world had come—and come it nearly did for us

It was just after four bells in the afternoon watch, following a shrieking squall that exceeded all that had gone before, and while the barque was still wallowing like a half-tide rock, that we saw a monstrous, foam-crested breaker rolling up astern.

We had seen many before; this was but a giant among giants, coming on with unopposable stride. It was the behaviour of the hardly-pressed barque that troubled us. She lay like a gladiator, sore-stricken and fainting, careless of the clamour around and the uplifted sword of an exultant foe. Buried deep under a weight of water, there was no life in her.

Higher and higher the comber rose, with a toppling, concave crest, swiftly overtaking the ship.

We doubted if the staggering hull would ever rise to it, and there was little need for the old man's hoarse shout: "Hang on all!" We sprang for stanchion and backstay and clung desperately to them. The towering grey-beard swept down on the ship, came up with her, and was met by no answering rise.

High above the taffrail—forty or fifty feet—it loomed, and the next moment it fell.

The fall of the firmament from above could not have been more terrible. Six feet above the poop deck we were buried under a black weight of water. For the space of a few seconds we knew not if the barque still floated or was being forced down to the depths inexorably. Through instinct more than exercise of will I hung on, with the strangle-hold of a nightmare upon me and the deadly thunder of water in my ears

I felt my shoulders were being wrenched out as demon-fingers plucked at me, then the weight of the avalanche lifted, and I knew the blessed feel of light and freedom again. It cannot have lasted for more than the space of a few seconds, but it sufficed me to learn the meaning of that word that in eternity a thousand years are but as a moment

The bosun and I had jumped for the port mizzen rigging and had been clinging to the top-mast backstay. As the water passed we looked up. The great roller that had pooped us swept for'ard and buried the ship deep under a green swirl of water. Even as we looked, two walls of water rushed in over the submerged bulwarks and collided down the length of the ship. The hull settled and felt dead beneath our feet.

"My God, she's gone!" said the bosun.

I glanced at the fore t'gallant yard, motionless

## ROUNDING THE HORN

against the sky. It was the last thing I ever expected to see. Nothing of the ship was visible, save the deck of the foc'sle head, like a lonely rock. Another bucket of water would have done for us.

For a few seconds we lay, as it were, stricken and a-swoon. Another white-lipped monster was rolling up astern, but before it reached us the gallant old barque seemed to make a mighty effort. She quivered and laboured heavily up, throwing the water from her main deck and lifting her streaming bows. As the roller swung down on us, her stern rose slowly to it, and it surged on and under, lifting the barque on its shoulders, spouting cataracts from every port.

The worst was over; we had come through that and were ready to face fresh onslaughts with confidence.

But what havoc it had played with us! As I looked aft I saw big Mac at the wheel and the old man, bareheaded, at his elbow. The wheel-box had utterly gone and the well-oiled steel couplings stood bare to the spray. The binnacle still stood, but the cabin skylight had gone to matchwood. Tons and tons of water had fallen below, flooding the cabins and filling them with a litter of wood and splintered glass. The top of the lazarette was smashed in, and the fragments of the scuttle held only by a broken hinge. All the poop gratings, the covering board and the weather cloth had dis-

appeared utterly. The poop was swept bare. What had happened on the main deck we couldn't see, but the flying bridge was smashed and the boat lashed on top of the house—a full seven feet above the deck—was stove in and lay, a dejected raffle of boards and broken edges, held together only by the lashings in which it was swathed.

Nor had the men escaped. All hands were there, but more or less battered. Several of them were bleeding; the second mate was propping John Neilsen, white-faced and barely conscious, up in the companion. The old mate lay under the mizzen rigging with his foot doubled up in a tangle of ropes, unable to rise. The steward, who was below in the cabin, was nearly drowned. There was no escape for the water up to the height of the pantry flap and it lay three feet deep in the saloon and cabin, swishing about with a wreckage of wood on top and a reef of broken glass underneath. He was all night bailing it out.

All through that shrieking afternoon, with never a jot of abatement in wind or sea, we ran blindly on our way, two men at the helm and the old man, broad-shouldered and bare-headed, standing before them, conning the ship. The binnacle was useless, broken for all we knew, for the Flinders-bars had gone with the skylight. Eye alone had to guide the ship now. Night came, and still the old man stood there, and next day broke and he

## ROUNDING THE HORN

had not once moved away. He rarely spoke, but with eyes ranging to port, to starboard, and aloft, directed the steering with motions of hand and arm. The navigators among us were fond of criticizing the old man, but that night he silenced criticism, as far as bad weather was concerned, once and for all. We should have been in bad plight but for his skill and endurance.

Fortunately our good main tops'l stood. We carried nothing away aloft, though several times we had to lay out on the yards and secure a sail that was in danger of being blown adrift. For the rest, all hands could only shelter on the poop—cold, hungry, and heavy-eyed, waiting for a break to lighten to wind'ard.

The fury of the gale moderated a little on the following afternoon and we were able to repair the broken skylight and restore the water-logged cabins to some semblance of order. The old mate was put into his bunk, badly wrenched and strained, but Neilsen hung on to his duty, though his neck and shoulders went black, through the violence of the blow he had received.

The wind still lessened, and at nightfall we shook out both lower tops'ls and were able to bring the ship to her course. On the following morning it had dropped to a fresh gale and we set the upper tops'ls. The old mate gamely struggled on to the poop and directed the work from there. Tommy

## REAL ADVENTURE

coaxed a fire into the galley-stove and we had a welcome cup of coffee. Chips was kept hard at work boarding up the skylight, and the captain spent a long time adjusting the compass as best he could.

This gale blew itself out, but hard, stormy weather followed us for some time longer. Nothing so bad as our experience of pooping occurred again though, and under double tops'ls we ran wallowing to the north-east.

As it was, the Horn had given us a rough baptism. We could not well have been nearer foundering than we were when that roller broke on us. Of the four times that I rounded the Horn in sail this was far and away the worst. I believe that it was an exceptionally stormy year, even for old Cape Stiff. A number of vessels had unusually rough handlings down there about that time. The experience of one vessel—the *Celtic Monarch*—was so bad as to find a permanent place in *The South Atlantic Directory*. And little enough as it sounds on paper, our own experiences were worse in the encounter than in the recapitulation.

REX CLEMENTS—*A Gipsy of the Horn*



## A BLIZZARD IN THE ALPS

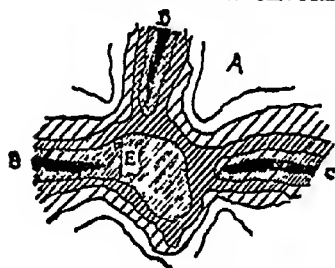
At three o'clock the guide knocked at my door, and I rose and came out to him. We drank coffee and ate bread. We put into our sacks ham and bread, and he white wine and I brandy. Then we set out. The rain had dropped to a drizzle, and there was no wind. The sky was obscured for the most part, but here and there was a star. The hills hung awfully above us in the night as we crossed the spongy valley. A little wooden bridge took us over the young Rhone, here only a stream, and we followed a path up into the tributary ravine which leads to the Nufenen and the Gries. In a mile or two it was a little lighter, and this was as well, for some weeks before a great avalanche had fallen, and we had to cross it.



gingerly. Beneath the wide cap of frozen snow ran a torrent roaring I remembered Colorado, and how I had crossed the Arkansaw on such a bridge as a boy. We went on in the uneasy dawn. The woods began to show, and there was a cross where a man had slipped from above that very April and been killed. Then, most ominous and disturbing, the drizzle changed to a rain, and the guide shook his head and said it would be snowing higher up. We went on, and it grew lighter. Before it was really day (or else the weather confused and darkened the sky), we crossed a good bridge, built long ago, and we halted at a shed where the cattle lie in the late summer when the snow is melted. There we rested a moment.

But on leaving its shelter we noticed many disquieting things. The place was a hollow, the end of the ravine—a bowl, as it were; one way out of which is the Nufenen, and the other the Gries.

Here it is in a sketch map. The heights are marked lighter and lighter, from black in the valleys to white in the impassable mountains. E is where we stood, in a great cup or basin, having just come up the ravine B. C is the Italian valley of



## A BLIZZARD IN THE ALPS

the Tosa, and the neck between it and E is the Gries. D is the valley of the Ticino, and the neck between E and it is the Nufenen. A is the Crystal Mountain. You may take the necks or passes to be about 8,000, and the mountains 10,000 or 11,000 feet above the sea.

We noticed, I say, many disquieting things. First, all that bowl or cup below the passes was a carpet of snow, save where patches of black water showed, and all the passes and mountains, from top to bottom, were covered with very thick snow; the deep surface of it soft and fresh fallen. Secondly, the rain had turned into snow. It was falling thickly all around. Nowhere have I more perceived the immediate presence of great Death. Thirdly, it was far colder, and we felt the beginning of a wind. Fourthly, the clouds had come quite low down.

The guide said it could not be done, but I said we must attempt it. I was eager, and had not yet felt the awful grip of the cold. We left the Nufenen on our left, a hopeless steep of new snow buried in fog, and we attacked the Gries. For half an hour we plunged on through snow above our knees, and my thin cotton clothes were soaked. So far the guide knew we were more or less on the path, and he went on and I panted after him. Neither of us spoke, but occasionally he looked back to make sure I had not dropped out.

The snow began to fall more thickly, and the wind had risen somewhat. I was afraid of another protest from the guide, but he stuck to it well, and I after him, continually plunging through soft snow and making yard after yard upwards. The snow fell more thickly and the wind still rose.

We came to a place which is, in the warm season, an alp, that is, a slope of grass, very steep but not terrifying; having here and there sharp little precipices of rock breaking it into steps, but by no means (in summer) a matter to make one draw back. Now, however, when everything was still Arctic it was a very different matter. A sheer steep of snow whose downward plunge ran into the driving storm and was lost, whose head was lost in the same mass of thick cloud above, a slope somewhat hollowed and bent inwards, had to be crossed if we were to go any farther; and I was terrified, for I knew nothing of climbing. The guide said there was little danger, only if one slipped one might slide down to safety, or one might (much less probably) get over rocks and be killed. I was chattering a little with cold; but as he did not propose a return, I followed him. The surface was alternately slabs of frozen snow and patches of soft new snow. In the first he cut steps, in the second we plunged, and once I went right in and a mass of snow broke off beneath me and went careering down the slope. He showed me

## A BLIZZARD IN THE ALPS

how to hold my staff backwards as he did his alpenstock, and use it as a kind of brake in case I slipped.

We had been about twenty minutes crawling over that wall of snow and ice; and it was more and more apparent that we were in for danger. Before we had quite reached the far side, the wind was blowing a very full gale and roared past our ears. The surface snow was whirring furiously like dust before it: past our faces and against them drove the snow-flakes, cutting the air: not falling, but making straight darts and streaks. They seemed like the form of the whistling wind; they blinded us. The rocks on the far side of the slope, rocks which had been our goal when we set out to cross it, had long ago disappeared in the increasing rush of the blizzard. Suddenly as we were still painfully moving on, stooping against the mad wind, these rocks loomed up over as large as houses, and we saw them through the swarming snow-flakes as great hulls are seen through a fog at sea. The guide crouched under the lee of the nearest; I came up close to him and he put his hands to my ear and shouted to me that nothing further could be done—he had so to shout because in among the rocks the hurricane made a roaring sound, swamping the voice.

I asked how far we were from the summit. He

## REAL ADVENTURE

said he did not know where we were exactly, but that we could not be more than 800 feet from it I was but that from Italy and I would not admit defeat. I offered him all I had in money to go on, but it was folly in me, because if I had had enough to tempt him and if he had yielded we should both have died. Luckily it was but a little sum. He shook his head. He would not go on, he broke out, for all the money there was in the world He shouted me to eat and drink, and so we both did. /

Then I understood his wisdom, for in a little while the cold began to seize me in my thin clothes. My hands were numb, my face already gave me intolerable pain, and my legs suffered and felt heavy. I learnt another thing (which had I been used to mountains I should have known), that it was not a simple thing to return. The guide was hesitating whether to stay in this rough shelter, or to face the chances of the descent. The terror had not crossed my mind, and I thought as little of it as I could, needing my courage, and being near to breaking down from the intensity of the cold.

It seems that in a *tourmente* (for by that excellent name do the mountain people call such a storm) it is always a matter of doubt whether to halt or to go back. If you go back through it and lose your way you are done for. If you halt in

## A BLIZZARD IN THE ALPS

some shelter, it may go on for two or three days, and then there is an end of you.

After a little he decided for a return, but he told me honestly what the chances were, and my suffering from cold mercifully mitigated my fear. But even in that moment, I felt in a confused but very conscious way that I was defeated. I had crossed so many great hills and rivers, and pressed so well on my undeviating arrow-line to Rome, and I had charged this one great barrier manfully where the straight path of my pilgrimage crossed the Alps—and I had failed! Even in that fearful cold I felt it, and it ran through my doubt of return like another and deeper current of pain. Italy was there, just above, right to my hand. A lifting of a cloud, a little respite, and every downward step would have been towards the sunlight. As it was, I was being driven back northward, in retreat and ashamed. The Alps had conquered me.

Let us always after this combat their immensity and their will, and always hate the inhuman guards that hold the gates of Italy, and the powers that lie in wait for men on those high places. But now I know that Italy will always stand apart. She is cut off by no ordinary wall, and Death has all his army on her frontiers.

Well, we returned. Twice the guide rubbed my hands with brandy, and once I had to halt

## REAL ADVENTURE

and recover for a moment, failing and losing my hold. Believe it or not, the deep footsteps of our ascent were already quite lost and covered by the new snow since our halt, and even had they been visible, the guide would not have retraced them. He did what I did not at first understand, but what I soon saw to be wise. He took a steep slant downward over the face of the snow-slope, and though such a pitch of descent a little unnerved me, it was well in the end. For when we had gone down perhaps 900 feet, or a thousand, in perpendicular distance, even I, half numb and fainting, could feel that the storm was less violent. Another two hundred, and the flakes could be seen not driving in flashes past, but separately falling. Then in some few minutes we could see the slope for a very long way downwards quite clearly; then, soon after, we saw far below us the place where the mountain-side merged easily into the plain of that cup or basin whence we had started.

When we saw this, the guide said to me, "Hold your stick thus, if you are strong enough, and let yourself slide" I could just hold it, in spite of the cold. Life was returning to me with intolerable pain. We shot down the slope almost as quickly as falling, but it was evidently safe to do so, as the end was clearly visible, and had no break or rock in it.

## A BLIZZARD IN THE ALPS

So we reached the plain below, and entered the little shed, and thence looking up, we saw the storm above us, but no one could have told it for what it was. Here, below, was silence, and the terror and raging above seemed only a great trembling cloud occupying the mountain. Then we set our faces down the ravine by which we had come up, and so came down to where the snow changed to rain. When we got right down into the valley of the Rhone, we found it all roofed with cloud, and the higher trees were white with snow, making a line like a tide mark on the slopes of the hills.

I re-entered "The Bear," silent and angered, and not accepting the humiliation of that failure. Then, having eaten, I determined in equal silence to take the road like any other fool; to cross the Furka by a fine highroad, like any tourist, and to cross the St Gothard by another fine highroad, as millions had done before me, and not to look heaven in the face again till I was back after my long detour, on the straight road again for Rome.

But to think of it! I who had all that planned out, and had so nearly done it! I who had cut a path across Europe like a shaft, and seen so many strange places!—now to have to recite all the litany of the vulgar; Bellinzona, Lugano, and this and that, which any railway travelling fellow can



REAL ADVENTURE

tell you Not till Como should I feel a man  
again . .

Indeed it is a bitter thing to have to give up  
one's sword.

HILAIRE BELLOC—*The Path to Rome.*



## STRANGE NIGHTS ON THE VELD

Now, Muse, let's sing of rats

—JAMES GRAINGER

(*The Sugar Cane*)

Nor long after my fateful expedition to Hygeia, my family all went up there and stayed at the huts I had built. We supplemented the huts with others of a more substantial sort and made the place quite comfortable. 85 44

The Leckie Ewings stayed with us, and contributed largely to my education. Mr. Leckie Ewing wrote poetry, philosophized, and composed oratorios which he sang generously to the hill winds. Mrs Leckie Ewing, who was from Donegal, was of a more practical nature, deep-

## REAL ADVENTURE

voiced, and a delightful comrade. She was already white-haired, but the strongest woman I ever knew. When I came in from a morning's wanderings amongst the hills, she used forcibly to take me to a basin of water and make me wash my grimy hands and face—not forgetting the neck—an operation which I loathed. — *sked*

After a month or so of prospecting on the Gold Belt, Mr. Leckie Ewing decided to go north to Inyanga—that great range of mountains called the Mountains of the Moon. He owned a farm up there, upon which he hoped to settle. I was to go with him, taking three boys, as far as Mysinanga, in order to build an “occupation” hut on a property belonging to my father.

We made the journey on foot. On our first trek we crossed the famous Slippery Drift through the Chodzana, or Odzani, River, and came to the mighty pass near Umtasa's kraal.<sup>1</sup> Mountain and peak were almost destitute of soil; great faces of grey granite, covered with coloured lichens, loomed up on all sides; but between the barren stone of the sheer krantzes, in the vast crevices of the riven hills, and among the far-flung

<sup>1</sup> Umtasa, or Mutasa or Mafambá-Busuku, chief of the Nica tribe, which gives its name to Manicaland. The treaty between him and Archibald Ross Colquhoun (afterwards the first Administrator of Mashonaland), on behalf of the Chartered Company, was signed 14 September, 1890

## STRANGE NIGHTS ON THE VELD

boulders—big as houses—that lay in the *poort*,<sup>1</sup> grew great numbers of Rhodesian planes, majanji, and other trees. From the steep cliffs on the left came the wild “Bor-koom,” “Bor-koom” of baboons going to their caves, while from the right came the thunderous echo of native drums and the shouts of men and women. The whole place was impressive enough by itself, but to add to everything imagine a little road winding between the massive boulders, now clinging for footing on the edge of the envious krantzes, and now blasted and torn from the rocky grip of the very hill itself, and so coming out hundreds of feet above, on the wind-swept plateau of Mysinanga 4

We camped in a deserted roadworker's hut, and were comfortably settling down for supper when I discovered an army of little grey insects ascending my boots. There are insects and creepy things of all kinds, but for sheer unpleasantness the jigger, or *matakenya*, is the most noted. This little crawling flea burrows into one's skin and lays a vast abundance of eggs, which, if allowed to hatch, mean ten days in hospital. I pointed them out to Mr. Leckie Ewing, who thought we might escape invasion by laying our blankets on some old sheets of galvanized iron which stood about, and raising the iron on logs and stones. This would give us a pair of impromptu beds x

<sup>1</sup> A narrow pass between precipitous hills or mountains.

## REAL ADVENTURE

Some men say that pumpkins, others that feather beds, are the most uncomfortable things to sleep on; but I think that galvanized iron, with one thickness of blanket underneath, is bad enough for most. And as this thought began to take hold on me, I heard a scuffling in the grass roof and around the walls. I could see nothing. Leckie Ewing travelled sumptuously, that is to say he had brought a candle, but we had blown it out. The scuffling noise became louder every moment; suppressed squeaks rose above the incessant rustling, and tiny feet ran lightly across my blankets.

Mr. Leckie Ewing's voice, tense with subdued excitement, broke the hubbub.

"What the dickens is making all that noise?" he demanded.

Before I could reply there was an agonized yell, and I heard the composer of oratorios dive under his blanket.

"Poof! by heaven"—his voice was thick with woven wool—"a rat fell on my face! A rat by gad! For Heaven's sake strike a match—I can't find any!"

A few moments of hurried fumbling in the haunted depths of the skoff-box, and I struck a light. A scene, the like of which men see in dreams alone, met our horrified gaze. Rats leaped from the skoff-box—from under our galvanized

## STRANGE NIGHTS ON THE VELD

beds—from under our very noses. They rushed into cracks in the walls, and so great was the crush that they sometimes jammed; they sped up the walls in strings: big ones—too big to be described—little ones and ones of middle size. They sprang on to us and over us, squealing like demons. Multitudes fought and struggled in the thatched roof. Here and there were holes to which they tore; at one hole there was a block, and a whole writhing phalanx of clinging rats, of all sizes and every degree of horribleness, dropped shrieking to the floor.

In ten seconds it was all over, and we two were left staring at each other with white faces. We laughed till we were on the verge of hysteria, but when we looked at the mangled remnants of our candle, at the skoff-box from which every atom of untinned food had been taken, and at one ripped boot, we had another feeling in our hearts besides that of amusement. I knew a man at Massikessi who, weakened by fever and lack of food, had to battle for his very life against the famished pigs of his own farm-yard. His companion, even weaker and more ill than himself, was dragged by the pigs from his bed not two yards away, and eaten alive . . . I felt that I should not like to be a sick man left with that army of rats.

The next day we rose to the Mysinanga level

## REAL ADVENTURE

—a plateau of cold breezes and short grass where we saw khnoorhaan<sup>1</sup> and secretaries, two birds that I always associate with that veld—just as I learned, later on, to associate swimpey<sup>2</sup> with Urungwe, guinea-fowl with the valley of the Zambesi, bush pheasants with the lower Sabi, and dikkop<sup>3</sup> and peewits with Rusapi. Before us, but many miles away, loomed the massive outline of the Mountains of the Moon. ,

At midday Mr. Leckie Ewing left me at my father's property, and went forward towards Inyanga, his eyes full of eagerness. . . .

My boys and I camped on a little neck of land, the narrowest strip of the plateau, and began building the hut; but first of all we put up a temporary shelter, just large enough to sleep in at night, and here a strange thing happened. We were asleep, a fire burning in the middle of the little hut; presently I was aroused by a gentle movement. Several strange Kafirs were in the hut, one was making up the fire; my own boys were sleeping like logs. The Kafirs looked at me, and with perfect assurance took the blanket that covered me, they then rolled me over and took my under-blankets. They took my rifle, my boys'

<sup>1</sup> "Scolding-cock," the common bustard

<sup>2</sup> From the Zulu *in-Swempe*, a quail, the name given to the Bush partridge

<sup>3</sup> A Dutch name for the stone plover

## STRANGE NIGHTS ON THE VELD

blankets, clothes, and food, and quietly went away.

Of course I thought I was dreaming, though I had never before dreamed of Kafirs—nor, indeed, have I since. But the curious fact is that I was not dreaming! We all awoke at dawn, bitterly cold, to find rifle, food, blankets—almost everything we possessed—gone!

I turned on my boys with an explosion of language that would have done credit to one of maturer years.

“Where are our things?” I asked.

In their naked chilliness they looked sheepishly at me and at one another. Then one of them remembered.

“Magondo!” he exclaimed, “I saw the men take my things!”

Then we all remembered, and that put a stop to recriminations. We did not attempt to discuss the mystery, but went forth armed with sticks and axes—the latter had been stuck in the thatching and had been overlooked. We tracked the thieves for several miles, but at length lost the spoor. We were as savage a little party as could well be imagined; had the thieves fallen into our hands, I believe we should have brained them, and hacked them limb from limb.

We returned furiously disconsolate. My boys considered that we had been bewitched—every



## REAL ADVENTURE

one of us remembered perfectly well seeing the strange Kafirs enter our shelter and quietly take our belongings; but that we should have remained quiescent, and have returned to peaceful slumbers, seemed a thing marvellous beyond imagination.

We found that enough food was left to enable us to stay a few more days; this we did, and completed the hut, but every night we took turns in mounting guard. I greatly regretted that I had left Vixen behind at Hygeia.

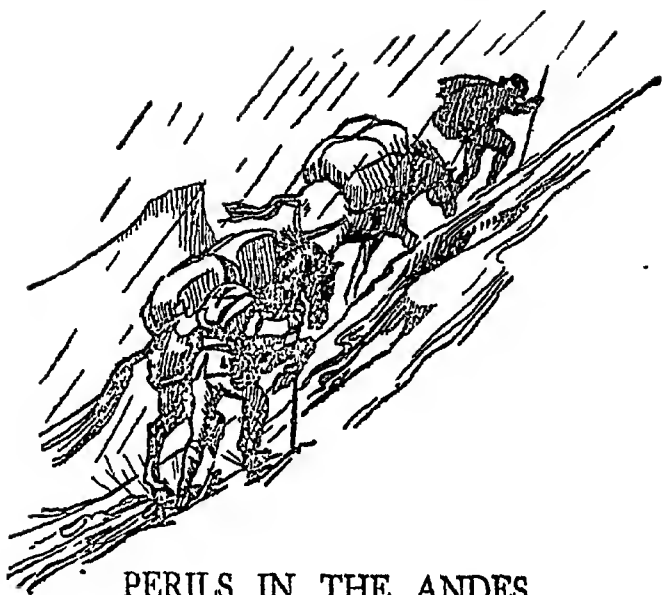
And when the work was done we went back, making a long trek of twenty-six miles in the day. Three almost naked boys and myself—dressed in pyjamas, a pair of boots, and a turban of dirty calico—arrived by night at Hygeia and told our story. We were received with entire incredulity, though the fact of our nakedness was patent to all.

Years afterwards a great number of rifles, and a quantity of other stolen goods, were discovered in a kraal at Mysinyanga. The Native Commissioner told my father that he had heard of other cases like mine. His theory was that certain natives knew of a herb, which when thrown on a fire gave off a smoke that had a drugging effect upon the senses. He quite believed my adventure, and thought that our thieves had

## STRANGE NIGHTS ON THE VELD

either thrown the herb on our fire while we slept, or made a small fire outside up-wind, so that the smoke blew through the thin thatching of our little shelter. I think, to-day, that he was right.

KINGSLEY FAIRBRIDGE—*Autobiography*.



## PERILS IN THE ANDES

LANDSLIDES and swollen rivers made it impossible to follow the road and compelled me to make a large detour over the mountains to the west. Natives who knew these regions advised me to take a guide, for alone I should have difficulty in finding the direction among the numerous little Indian footpaths

With the mayor's assistance I found an Indian in a village who agreed to come with me, but unfortunately the man could neither speak nor understand Spanish. I bought some provisions, and without losing time started out, the guide, like most Indians, preferring to go on foot, and even when the horses went at a trot he kept up

## PERILS IN THE ANDES

with us with ease. After some time he led us into very rough country, and often he made a sign to me to go ahead, and then he took a short cut, and later I found him sitting somewhere far ahead, chewing coca whilst waiting for us.

We had crossed some giddy and wobbly hanging bridges before, but here we came to the worst I had ever seen or ever wish to see again. Even without horses the crossing of such bridges is apt to make anybody feel cold ripples running down the back, and, in fact, many people have to be blindfolded and strapped on stretchers to be carried across. Spanning a wild river the bridge looked like a long, thin hammock swung high up from one rock to another. Bits of rope, wire and fibre held the rickety structure together, and the floor was made of sticks laid crosswise and covered with some coarse fibre matting to give a foothold and to prevent slipping that would inevitably prove fatal. The width of this extraordinary piece of engineering was no more than four feet, and its length must have been roughly one hundred and fifty yards. In the middle the thing sagged down like a slack rope.

I went to examine it closely, and the very sight of it made me feel giddy, and the thought of what might easily happen produced a feeling in my stomach as if I had swallowed a block of ice. For a while I hesitated, and then I decided to chance

## REAL ADVENTURE

it, for there was no other alternative but to return to Ayacucho and there wait for the dry season. I unsaddled the horses, and giving the Indian the lead-line I made signs to him to go ahead with Mancha first. Knowing the horse well, I caught him by the tail and walked behind talking to him to keep him quiet. When we stepped on the bridge he hesitated for a moment, then he sniffed the matting with suspicion, and after examining the strange surroundings he listened to me and cautiously advanced. As we approached the deep sag in the middle, the bridge began to sway horribly, and for a moment I was afraid the horse would try to turn back, which would have been the end of him; but no, he had merely stopped to wait until the swinging motion was less, and then he moved on again. I was nearly choking with excitement, but kept on talking to him and patting his haunches, an attention of which he was very fond. Once we started upwards after having crossed the middle, even the horse seemed to realize that we had passed the worst part, for now he began to hurry towards safety. His weight shook the bridge so much that I had to catch hold of the wires on the sides to keep my balance. Gato, when his turn came, seeing his companion on the other side, gave less trouble and crossed over as steadily as if he were walking along a trail. Once the horses were safely on the other

## PERILS IN THE ANDES

side we carried over the packs and saddles, and when we came to an Indian hut where "chicha" and other native beverages were sold we had an extra long drink to celebrate our successful crossing, whilst the horses quietly grazed as if they had accomplished nothing out of the way.

Torrential rains began to pour down, and the mountain trails were soon converted into rushing streams that carried earth and loose stones with them, and often we had to wait until the down-pour ceased before we could proceed.

The guide pointed towards a mountain-side that towered up into the sky like a wall, and it seemed to me that he tried to make me understand that we would have to climb up there, but as this looked like an impossibility to me I thought I must be misunderstanding him. Much to my surprise our path led straight towards this formidable mountain-side, and presently we started up a neck-breaking path which had been partly hewn and partly worn out of the rocky wall. It was so steep and slippery that at first I considered it a physical impossibility for horses to climb up there, and when we finally came to the top I saw that another similar obstacle was ahead of us. A traveller soon gets used to such disappointments in the Andes, for often, after having reached what one thought would be the end of a long and weary climb, one sees another ahead,

## REAL ADVENTURE

and frequently one has by no means finished with the eternal zig-zags even when the second has been surmounted.

The Indians in these parts may appear to be sullen, but yet I found them kind and hospitable. I shall always remember how well a solitary woman treated us when we arrived at her hut. Her husband was away, and so she was left alone with the children. She prepared food for us, and in return I gave her and the children some chocolate, for the good woman refused to accept money. We spread our blankets under a low shelter where we slept alongside some pigs, but when one is tired and the nights cold one is satisfied with any kind of protection. When daylight permitted we were glad to be off again, for it was bitterly cold, and my fingers were stiff and aching.

Below us the valleys and hollows were still wrapped in inky darkness whilst the first rays of the sun gave the highest peaks the appearance of glowing heaps of charcoal. By degrees, as the sun rose higher, the light crept further and further down the slopes, until it shone on the heavy mists below. Soon our shivering bodies began to feel the agreeable warmth, and the puffs of vapour that came out of the horses' nostrils with every breath became fainter and fainter as the atmosphere warmed up.

After some time the sea of mist began to heave

## PERILS IN THE ANDES

and roll, and here and there we could see the valley through an opening, but soon a drifting cloud again covered the gap. Every now and again a heavy mass of white would gather and rise above the rest, assuming grotesque shapes of gigantic human heads or strange monsters that looked as if they were rising out of an angry and foaming sea. Slowly the mists rose until they reached us; then for a while the sun looked like a grey disc until it completely disappeared behind a thick curtain, and then a damp chill began to penetrate through our clothes. I was hoping that the clouds and fogs would lift towards noon, but this did not happen, and as time went on it became darker and darker. Towards evening thunder began to rumble in the distance, and suddenly a furious storm began to rage around us. The Indian, who was carrying our small food supply on his back, hurried ahead, and when we found an overhanging rock we took shelter under it. The rain poured down in such torrents that I was thankful not to be on a slope or in one of those trails in a hollow.

When the storm had passed the Indian left me, and, thinking he had merely gone to see what the weather was likely to do, I sat down to wait for him. After about a quarter of an hour I began to wonder what was keeping the man away for so long, and went to look for him, but although I



## REAL ADVENTURE

searched in every direction and called, there was no sign of him. It was already dusk and still he did not appear, so I unsaddled and prepared to spend the night under the rock where we had taken refuge during the storm. Obviously the cunning Indian had returned towards home, taking with him all my food supplies, and as I had paid him in advance he must have thought it foolish to face further hardships, especially during an abnormally severe rainy season.

This was by no means the first time I had been in similar situations, and so I settled down to make the best of it until dawn would permit us to continue. There was no grass, so the horses stood alongside me whilst I sat on the sheep-skins of the saddle and puffed away at some cigarettes, whilst imagining myself to be picking my choice from a long menu in some luxurious Parisian restaurant, and possibly my animals were dreaming of green alfalfa fields and feed-boxes full of crisp, golden oats. To my great joy, I discovered a treasure wrapped up in a paper in the saddle-bags—a piece of unrefined sugar. In the morning I cut this into three pieces, and whilst I made ready to start, the three of us chewed away, and when we had finished our mouthfuls we tried to remember the pleasant taste by licking our slobbery lips.

For mountain travelling a compass is of no use.

## PERILS IN THE ANDES

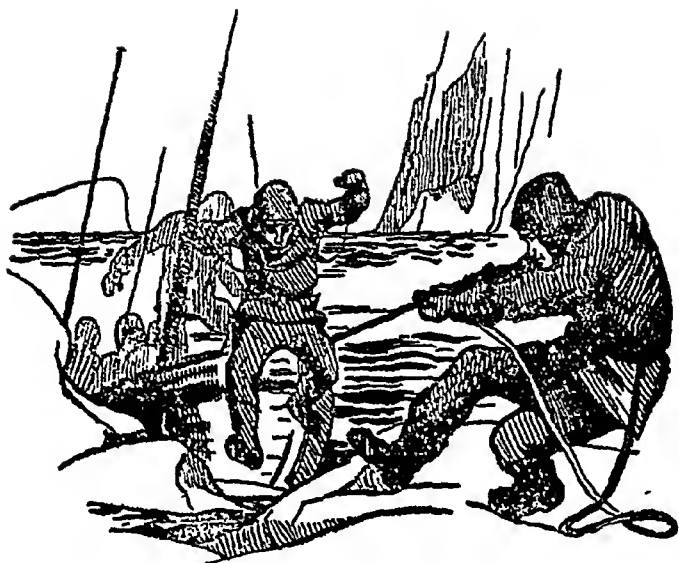
for it is impossible to leave the narrow trails, and when one happens to come to a place where a path branches off in another direction one has to guess which one to take, and leave the rest to chance. I was lucky that day, for in the evening I sighted a small settlement on a slope, and when I arrived there the "alcalde" (alderman) told me I was in Paucara, and in spite of not being any the wiser for this piece of information, I was glad to be there, for at least there were hopes of getting something to eat. The Indian alcalde gave me quarters in an empty hut next to his, and after a while brought me a steaming plate of barley soup and a bundle of straw for the horses. I could have taken many times the amount of soup I was given, but even the small quantity I had made me feel like a new man. When I went to look at the horses I found that they had already finished their feed, and so I walked from hut to hut, trying my best to get them some more, and although I was willing to pay any price for it, only one man reluctantly parted with a very little of his limited supply.

At sunrise the alcalde put me on a trail, informing me that by following it I would hit the "Mejorada," which is the terminus of the Central Peruvian Railroad. More than once I thought I must have gone the wrong way, for evening was approaching, and still I could see no railway line

Rounding a bend my fears were dispelled, for far below us, in a green valley, I saw a thin line, like a black thread that wound and twisted along the foot of the mountain. We were safe, for this must be a railroad, a thing I had not seen for a long, long time.

At the top of a steep zig-zag I halted to re-saddle before starting the descent. Whilst I was doing this a man arrived on a mule, and introduced himself as Herr X., a German mining engineer. He almost cried whilst he related that he had been lost all night and that he felt as empty as a drum, and judging by his looks the experience had made a great impression on him. Together we slowly descended towards the houses which looked like mere specks from above. At the railway terminus there was a small restaurant and store in a newly-erected wooden house. The hungry German rushed into it without even wasting time in, first, unsaddling his sorry-looking mule, and presently he appeared again with a string of sausages and a big chunk of bread, into which he put his teeth with the ferocity of a starving tiger.

A F TSCHIFFELY—*Tschiffely's Ride*



## THE END OF THE BOAT JOURNEY

DURING the afternoon the wind freshened to a good stiff breeze, and the *James Caird* made satisfactory progress. I had not realized until the sunlight came how small our boat really was. So low in the water were we that each succeeding swell cut off our view of the skyline. At one moment the consciousness of the forces arrayed against us would be almost overwhelming, and then hope and confidence would rise again as our boat rose to a wave and tossed aside the crest in a sparkling shower. My gun and some cartridges were stowed aboard the boat as a precaution against a shortage of food, but we were not disposed to destroy our little neighbours, the Cape

## REAL ADVENTURE

pigeons, even for the sake of fresh meat. We might have shot an albatross, but the wandering king of the ocean aroused in us something of the feeling that inspired, too late, the Ancient Mariner.

The eighth, ninth and tenth days of the voyage had few features worthy of special note. The wind blew hard during these days, and the strain of navigating the boat was unceasing, but we kept on advancing towards our goal and felt that we were going to succeed. We still suffered severely from the cold, for our vitality was declining owing to shortage of food, exposure, and the necessity of maintaining our cramped positions day and night. I found that it was now absolutely necessary to prepare hot milk for all hands during the night, in order to sustain life until dawn. This involved an increased drain upon our small supply of matches, and our supply already was very small indeed. One of the memories which comes to me of those days is of Crean singing at the tiller. He always sang while he was steering, but nobody ever discovered what the song was.

On the tenth night Worsley could not straighten his body after his spell at the tiller. He was thoroughly cramped, and we had to drag him beneath the decking and massage him before he could unbend himself and get into a sleeping-bag.

A hard north-westerly gale came up on the

## THE END OF THE BOAT JOURNEY

eleventh day (May 5th), and in the late afternoon it shifted to the south-west. The sky was overcast and occasional snow-squalls added to the discomfort produced by a tremendous cross-sea—the worst, I thought, which we had encountered. At midnight I was at the tiller, and suddenly noticed a line of clear sky between the south and south-west. I called to the other men that the sky was clearing, and then, a moment later, realized that what I had seen was not a rift in the clouds but the white crest of an enormous wave.

During twenty-six years' experience of the ocean in all its moods I had never seen a wave so gigantic. It was a mighty upheaval of the ocean, a thing quite apart from the big white-capped seas which had been our tireless enemies for many days. I shouted, "For God's sake, hold on! It's got us!" Then came a moment of suspense which seemed to last for hours. We felt our boat lifted and flung forward like a cork in breaking surf. We were in a seething chaos of tortured water; but somehow the boat lived through it, half-full of water, sagging to the dead weight and shuddering under the blow. We bailed with the energy of men fighting for life, flinging the water over the sides with every receptacle which came into our hands; and after ten minutes of uncertainty we felt the boat renew her life beneath us. She floated again, and ceased to lurch drunk--

## REAL ADVENTURE

only as though dazed by the attack of the sea. Earnestly we hoped that never again should we encounter such a wave. 4-

The conditions of the boat, uncomfortable before, were made worse by this deluge of water. All our gear was thoroughly wet again, and our cooking-stove was floating about in the bottom of the boat. Not until 3 a.m., when we were all chilled to the limit of endurance, did we manage to get the stove alight and to make ourselves hot drinks. The carpenter was suffering particularly, but he showed grit and spirit. Vincent, however, had collapsed, and for the past week had ceased to be an active member of the crew.

On the following day (May 6th) the weather improved, and we got a glimpse of the sun. Worsley's observation showed that we were not more than 100 miles from the north-west corner of South Georgia. Two more days, with a favourable wind, and we should sight the promised land. I hoped that there would be no delay, as our supply of water was running very low. The hot drink at night was essential, but I decided that the daily allowance of water must be cut down to half a pint per man. Our lumps of ice had gone some days before; we were dependent upon the water which we had brought from Elephant Island, and our thirst was increased by the fact that we were at this time using the brackish water in the

## THE END OF THE BOAT JOURNEY

breaker which had been slightly 'stove in when the boat was being loaded. Some sea-water had entered it

Thirst took possession of us, but I dared not permit the allowance of water to be increased, because an unfavourable wind might have driven us away from the island and have lengthened our voyage by several days. Lack of water is always the most severe privation which men can be condemned to endure, and we found that the salt water in our clothing and the salt spray which lashed our faces made our thirst quickly grow to a burning pain. I had to be very firm in refusing to allow anyone to anticipate the morrow's allowance, which sometimes I was begged to do.

I had altered the course to the east so as to make sure of striking the island, which would have been impossible to regain if we had run past the northern end. The course was laid on our scrap of chart for a point some thirty miles down the coast. That day and the following day passed for us in a sort of nightmare. Our mouths were dry and our tongues were swollen. The wind was still strong and the heavy sea forced us to navigate carefully. But any thought of our peril from the waves was buried beneath the consciousness of our raging thirst. The bright moments were those when we each received our one mug of hot milk during the long, bitter watches of the night.



## REAL ADVENTURE

Things were bad for us in those days, but the end was approaching. The morning of May 8th broke thick and stormy, with squalls from the north-west. We searched the waters ahead for a sign of land, and, although we searched in vain, we were cheered by a sense that the goal was near. About 10 a m. we passed a little bit of kelp, a glad signal of the proximity of land. An hour later we saw two shags sitting on a big mass of kelp, and we knew then that we must be within ten or fifteen miles of the shore. These birds are as sure an indication of the proximity of land as a lighthouse is, for they never venture far to sea.

We gazed ahead with increasing eagerness, and at 12.30 p m., through a rift in the clouds, McCarthy caught a glimpse of the black cliffs of South Georgia, just fourteen days after our departure from Elephant Island. It was a glad moment. Thirst-ridden, chilled, and weak as we were, happiness irradiated us. The job was nearly done.

We stood in towards the shore to look for a landing-place, and presently we could see the green tussock-grass on the ledges above the surf-beaten rocks. Ahead of us, and to the south, blind rollers showed the presence of uncharted reefs along the coast. The rocky coast appeared to descend sheer to the sea. Our need of water and rest was almost desperate, but to have at-

## THE END OF THE BOAT JOURNEY

tempted a landing at that time would have been suicidal. ✕

Night was approaching and the weather indications were unfavourable. We could do nothing but haul off until the following morning, so we stood away on the starboard tack until we had made what appeared to be a safe offing. Then we hove to in the high westerly swell. The hours passed slowly as we waited the dawn; our thirst was a torment and we could scarcely touch our food, the cold seemed to strike right through our weakened bodies

At 5 a.m. the wind shifted to the north-west, and quickly increased to one of the worst hurricanes any of us had ever experienced. A great cross-sea was running and the wind simply shrieked as it converted the whole seascape into a haze of driving spray. Down into the valleys, <sup>fr</sup> up to tossing heights, straining until her seams opened, swung our little boat, brave still but labouring heavily. We knew that the wind and set of the sea were driving us ashore, but we could do nothing.

The dawn revealed a storm-torn ocean, and the morning passed without bringing us a sight of the land, but at 1 p.m., through a rift in the flying mists, we got a glimpse of the huge crags of the island and realized that our position had become desperate. We were on a dead lee shore, and we

could gauge our approach to the unseen cliffs by the roar of the breakers against the sheer walls of rock. I ordered the double-reefed mainsail to be set in the hope that we might claw off, and this attempt increased the strain upon the boat.

The *James Caird* was bumping heavily, and the water was pouring in everywhere. Our thirst was forgotten in the realization of our imminent danger, as we bailed unceasingly and from time to time adjusted our weights; occasional glimpses showed that the shore was nearer.

I knew that Annewkow Island lay to the south of us, but our small and badly marked chart showed uncertain reefs in the passage between the island and the mainland, and I dared not trust it, though, as a last resort, we could try to lie under the lee of the island.

The afternoon wore away as we edged down the coast, and the approach of evening found us still some distance from Annewkow Island; dimly in the twilight we could see a snow-capped mountain looming above us. The chance of surviving the night seemed small, and I think most of us felt that the end was very near. Just after 6 p.m., as the boat was in the yeasty backwash from the seas flung from this iron-bound coast, just when things looked their worst, they changed for the best; so thin is the line which divides success from failure.

The wind suddenly shifted, and we were free

## THE END OF THE BOAT JOURNEY

once more to make an offing. Almost as soon as the gale eased the pin which locked the mast to the thwart fell out. Throughout the hurricane it must have been on the point of doing this, and if it had nothing could have saved us. The mast would have snapped like a carrot. Our backstays had carried away once before, when iced up, and were not too strongly fastened. We were thankful indeed for the mercy which had held the pin in its place during the hurricane.

We stood off shore again, tired almost to the point of apathy. Our water had long been finished. The last was about a pint of hairy liquid, which we strained through a bit of gauze from the medicine chest. The pangs of thirst attacked us with redoubled intensity, and I felt that at almost any risk we must make a landing on the following day. The night wore on. We were very tired and longed for day. When at last dawn came there was hardly any wind, but a high cross-sea was running. We made slow progress towards the shore.

About 8 a.m. the wind backed to the north-west and threatened another blow. In the meantime we had sighted a big indentation which I thought must be King Haakon Bay, and I decided that we must land there. We set the bows of the boat towards the bay, and ran before the freshening gale. Soon we had angry reefs on either side

Great glaciers came down to the sea and offered no landing-place. The sea spouted on the reefs and thundered against the shore. About noon we sighted a line of jagged reef, like blackened teeth, which seemed to bar the entrance to the bay. Inside, fairly smooth water stretched eight or nine miles to the head of the bay.

A gap in the reef appeared, and we made for it, but the fates had another rebuff for us. The wind shifted and blew from the east right out of the bay. We could see the way through the reef, but we could not approach it directly. That afternoon we bore up, tacking five times in the strong wind. The last tack enabled us to get through, and at last we were in the wide mouth of the bay.

Dusk was approaching. A small cove, with a boulder-strewn beach guarded by a reef, made a break in the cliffs on the south side of the bay, and we turned in that direction. I stood in the bows, and directed the steering as we ran through the kelp and made the passage of the reef. The entrance was so narrow that we had to take in the oars, and the swell was piling itself right over the reef into the cove. But in a minute or two we were inside, and in the gathering darkness the *James Caird* ran in on a swell and touched the beach.

I sprang ashore with the short painter, and held

## THE END OF THE BOAT JOURNEY

on when the boat went out with the backward surge. When the boat came in again three men got ashore and held the painter while I climbed some rocks with another line. A slip on the wet rocks 20 feet up nearly closed my part of the story, just when we were achieving safety. A jagged piece of rock held me and also sorely bruised me. I, however, made fast the line, and in a few minutes we were all safe on the beach, with the boat floating in the surging water just off the shore.

We heard a gurgling sound which was sweet music in our ears, and, peering round, we found a stream of fresh water almost at our feet. A moment later we were down on our knees drinking the pure, ice-cold water in long draughts which put new life into us. It was a splendid moment.

SIR ERNEST SHACKLETON—*South*



## AN AVALANCHE ON MOUNT EVEREST

ANOTHER great feat of mountaineering had been performed, another record established; but Everest was still unconquered. That was the brutal fact that had now to be faced. Everest was still unconquered and the Expedition was almost exhausted. There were no reserves available. The best mountaineers had already made their effort. And men can hardly make two efforts on Everest in the same season. Still the climbers were not even yet prepared to accept defeat. They would go on till they were definitely turned back. This was their attitude as they lay at the Base Camp recuperating.

Somervell was on the whole the fittest. Mallory was suffering from a slight frost-bite, and his heart

## AN AVALANCHE ON MOUNT EVEREST

was to a small extent affected. Norton also was frost-bitten and weakened in the heart. And Morshead was in constant pain from frost-bite and there was great risk of his losing his fingers. These two last would certainly have to go back without any possible delay to Sikkim. And when Finch and Geoffrey Bruce arrived at the Base Camp it was found that the latter's feet were so badly frost-bitten that he could not walk. Finch himself, though greatly exhausted, was not affected by frost-bite or in the heart. This was the not very hopeful condition of the climbers at the end of May. Strutt, too, was very much overdone. Longstaff was not his old self. And neither Wakefield nor Crawford had acclimatized well for high altitudes. *might*

But there might be just time before the monsoon broke to make one more effort if a few of these recovered a little more. Strutt, Morshead, Geoffrey Bruce, Norton and Longstaff would certainly have to go down to Sikkim at once. There was just a chance, though, that Mallory's heart might improve and Finch recover from his exhaustion.

On June 3rd Mallory was examined and found to be fit, and it was at once arranged that a third attempt should be made, though General Bruce warned all concerned that they were to run no undue risks with the monsoon. Mallory, Somer-



## REAL ADVENTURE

vell and Finch would constitute the climbing party, Wakefield and Crawford furnish the support at Camp III. And plenty of porters would be available for both. That same day the party reached Camp I, but Finch was so obviously unfit to proceed that he went back the next day and joined Longstaff's party of invalids on their way to Sikkim. He had indeed done his full share already and no one could expect him to do more. And this day, June 4th, showed ominous signs of the monsoon. Snow was falling heavily and the party had to remain where they were. They might well have gone back, recognizing that the monsoon had broken and acknowledging that no further attempt was possible. But the break of the monsoon in that region is no very definite occurrence. Heavy snow falls and then there is a pause and a spell of fine weather. It was on the chance of a spell of fine weather that Mallory counted. They would not, he writes, run their heads into obvious dangers; but, rather than be stopped by a general estimate of conditions, they would prefer to retire before some definite risk that they were not prepared to take, or simply fail to overcome the difficulties.

Snow fell all the second night at Camp I, but on the morning of June 5th the weather improved and they decided to go on. They were surprised to find that this fall of snow had made little differ-

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ence on the glacier. Most of it had melted or evaporated and it lay only 6 inches deep. So they passed Camp II and proceeded straight on to Camp III. And here the snow was much deeper and the whole scene, with the clouds hanging about the mountain-side, grey and cheerless. Moreover, the tents had been struck in order to save the poles and were now half-full of snow and ice, and the stores were buried in the snow and had to be dug out.

Was it possible under these circumstances to go on? Was there really any prospect of their reaching the summit or climbing any higher than they had already climbed? That evening it seemed doubtful. But the next morning broke fine, there was soon a clear sky and glorious sunshine; and hope revived, especially as snow was being blown from the North-East Ridge and it would soon be fit to climb.

And now they were pinning their faith on the oxygen. They would not be able to establish a second camp above the North Col. And without a second camp they knew they could not, unaided, climb higher than where they had already reached. But oxygen was to work wonders. Somervell had learnt about the mechanical details from Finch, so could manage the apparatus, he was sure. And those who had used the oxygen were so convinced of its efficacy that Mallory and

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Somervell made themselves believe in it too. They intended to profit by Finch's experience. They would again try to pitch a camp at 26,000 feet. And they would not begin using oxygen until they had reached 25,000 feet.

The wall to the North Col, however, had first to be tackled. They did not expect to reach the Col in one day: the amount of new snow on it was too great. But they could begin work at once carrying loads up some part of the way, for they must make the most of the fine weather while it lasted. That same day, therefore, June 7th, they commenced this work.

They started at 8 a. m. and, in spite of the hard frost during the night, they found the crust hardly bore their weight and they sank up to their knees at almost every step. Avalanches they might expect, but they feared them only in one place, the steep final 200-foot slope below the shelf on which Camp IV was pitched. There they would have to proceed with caution, testing the snow before they crossed the slope. For the rest of the way they thought there would be no danger.

Wakefield had been left at Camp III as supply officer, and the party on this North Col wall now consisted of Mallory, Somervell, and Crawford, with fourteen porters. It was clear that the three climbers, having no loads, must take the lead, stamping out a track for the laden porters as they

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ascended the steep ice-slope, now covered with snow. This snow adhered so well to the ice that they were able to get up without cutting steps. Everything was done by trenching the snow to induce it to come down if it would. But there was no move. And this crucial place being passed, they plodded on without hesitation. If snow would not come down there, it would not come down on the gentler slopes, they believed. There was no risk now of an avalanche. x

So they struggled on through the deep snow; and exhausting work it was, as after each lifting movement it was necessary to pause for a whole series of breaths before the weight was transferred again to the other foot. Fortunately, the day was bright and windless; and by 1.30 they were about 400 feet below a conspicuous block of ice and 600 feet below the North Col, still on the gentle slopes of the corridor. Here they rested for a time till the porters, following on three separate ropes, came up. Then the whole party advanced again, carefully indeed but unsuspecting of danger.

They had proceeded only 100 feet, Somervell leading, and rather up the slope than across it, and the last party of porters had barely begun to move up in his steps, when all of a sudden they were startled by "an ominous sound, sharp, arresting, violent and yet somehow soft like an

explosion of untamped gun-powder." Mallory had never before heard such a sound. But he knew instinctively what it meant. He observed the surface of the snow break and pucker. Then he was borne slowly downward in the moving surface, carried along by an irresistible force. He managed to turn out from the slope so as to avoid being pushed headlong and backwards down it. And for a second or two he seemed hardly to be in danger as he went quietly sliding down with the snow. Then the rope at his waist tightened and held him back. A wave of snow came over him and he was buried. All seemed to be up with him. But he remembered that the best chance of escape in such a situation was by swimming. So he thrust out his arm over his head and went through the motions of swimming on his back. Then he felt the pace of the avalanche easing up. At length it came to rest. His arms were free. His legs were near the surface. And after a brief struggle he was standing, surprised and breathless, in the motionless snow.

But the rope was tight at his waist: the porter tied on next him, he supposed, must be deeply buried. To Mallory's surprise he emerged, unharmed. Somervell and Crawford also soon extricated themselves. Their experiences had been much the same as Mallory's

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So far so good. And one group of four porters could be seen 150 feet below. Perhaps the others would be safe too. But these four were pointing downward, and it was evident that the other porters must have been carried farther. Mallory and his companions hurried to them and they soon saw that beneath the place where the four porters were standing was a formidable drop—an ice-cliff 40 feet high. The missing men must have been swept over it. The climbers quickly found a way round to its base, and then their worst fears were confirmed. One man was rapidly disinterred and found to be still alive; and he recovered. Another, carrying four oxygen cylinders on a steel frame, and found upside down, was still breathing, though he had been buried for about forty minutes. And he also recovered, and was able to walk down to Camp III. But seven were killed.

Thus the third attempt ended in a tragedy. Evidently the party ought not to have ventured on the North Col slopes. But to say that is only to be wise after the event. To all appearances the conditions were safe. And Mallory and Somervell were experienced—and cautious—mountaineers. They were working against time, it may be admitted. But they were not the men to run needless risks; and they were not the men to risk the lives of their poor laden porters un-

necessarily. For these porters they had, indeed, the greatest respect and affection.

The effect of the loss upon the British members of the Expedition was one of deep compassion for men who had lost their lives in faithfully playing their part in a great adventure. The effect upon the relatives and friends of these men and upon the peoples round has been described by General Bruce in some passages of his report which are particularly valuable as showing the attitude of local peoples to accidents of this kind.

On receipt of the news he communicated it to the great Lama of the Rongbuk Monastery, who was "intensely sympathetic and kind over the whole matter." Buddhist services were held in the monasteries for the men who were killed and for their families. And all the porters, and particularly the relations of the men who were killed, were received and specially blessed by the Lama himself. Later on General Bruce also received from his friend the Maharaja of Nepal a letter of condolence. "This puts in my mind," His Highness wrote, "the curious belief that persistently prevails with the people here, and which I came to learn so long ago in the time of our mutual friend, Colonel Manners Smith, when the question of giving permission for the project of climbing the King of Heights through Nepal was brought by you and discussed in a council of Bharadars.

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It is to the effect that the height is the abode of the god and goddess Shiva and Parvati, and any invasion of the privacy of it would be a sacrilege, fraught with disastrous consequences to the Hindu country and its people. And this belief or superstition, as one may choose to call it, is so firm and strong that people attribute the present tragic occurrence to the divine wrath which on no account would they draw on their heads by any action "

Thus was the calamity viewed by the Tibetans on the north and the Nepalese on the south of Everest. Bruce says of the Tibetans that they are a curious mixture of superstition and nice feelings. And the same he would evidently say of the Nepalese.

He further says that the Nepalese tribes who live high up in the mountains, and also the Sherpa Bhutias, have a belief that when a man slips and is killed this is a sacrifice to God, and especially to the god of the actual mountain. They further believe that anyone who happens to be on the same mountain at the same place, at the same date and hour, will also slip and be killed.

However, notwithstanding this calamity and these superstitions, the remaining porters of the Expedition soon took a light-hearted view of things. They held simply that the men's time had come. If their time had not come they



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would not have died. It had come and they had died. There was no need to say more. That was their fatalistic creed. And they were perfectly ready to join another Everest Expedition. If it was written they would die on Everest they would die. If it was written that they would not die they wouldn't. There was an end of the matter.

The calamity did not therefore in the least discourage them or others. And they and their fellows came forward just as readily for the next as they had for this Expedition.

Nevertheless, the climbers themselves were deeply concerned at the disaster. They felt it as a slur on their character as mountaineers. But, if a slur it was, Mallory and Somervell amply removed it two years later on this very same spot, as we shall presently hear.

SIR FRANCIS YOUNGHUSBAND—*The Epic of Mount Everest*



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TOWARDS midnight, after we had shut our eyes for an hour to try and induce the sentry to go to sleep, I hit on a plan, which I believe now to have been the only possible solution of the problem. There were six of us and a sentry in a small corridor carriage, so that we were rather crowded; both racks were full of small baggage, and there was a fair litter on the floor. When the train next went slowly, and when I considered the moment had come, I was to give the word by saying to the sentry, in German of course, "Will you have some food? we are going to eat." Then followed five or ten minutes of tense excitement, when we tried to keep up a normal conversation but could think of nothing to say. Medlicott had

the happy thought of giving me some medicine out of his case, which came in most useful; but all he could say was, "It's a snip, you'll do it for a certainty." Suddenly the train began to slow up. "Now?" I said to Buckley, and he nodded, so I leant across and said to the sentry, "Wir wollen essen; wollen Sie etwas nehmen?" Then every one in the carriage with one accord stood up and pulled their stuff off the racks. The sentry also stood up, but was almost completely hidden from the window by a confused mass of men and bags. Buckley and I both stood up on our seats. I slipped the strap of my haversack over my shoulder—we both of us already had on our Burberrys—pushed down the window, put my leg over, and jumped into the night. I fell—not very heavily—on the wires at the side of the track, and lay still in the dark shadow. Three seconds later Buckley came flying out of the window, and seemed to take rather a heavy toss. The end of the train was not yet past me, and we knew there was a man with a rifle in the last carriage; so when Buckley came running along the track calling out to me, I caught him and pulled him into the ditch at the side. The train went by, and its tail lights vanished round a corner and apparently no one saw or heard us. Whether the sentry saw us get out, neither Buckley nor I ever knew, but anyhow I think Medlicott had him pretty well

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wedged up in the corner. There must have been an amusing scene in the carriage after we left, and I am ready to bet that the officer shouted a bit.<sup>1</sup> As soon as the train was out of sight, Buckley and I walked back down the track for a couple of hundred yards and cut across country in a south-west direction. There was no danger from any pursuit from the train. It was a darkish night, and there were pine forests in all directions. A hundred men chasing us would not have caught us. Besides, if they sent any of our guard after us, more prisoners would escape. Under a convenient hedge we made the few changes which were necessary in our clothes, threw away our military caps, and got out our compasses and a very poor sketch map of Buckley's, which was to serve us as a guide for the next hundred kilometres and more, till we could use our proper maps.

We were, we reckoned, between ten and fifteen miles almost due north of Nuremberg. We would have to skirt this town—though we discussed the advisability of walking straight into Nuremberg and doing a short railway journey from there before any alarm or description of us

<sup>1</sup> I have learnt since from Major Gaskell that nearly a minute elapsed before the sentry realized that we had departed. After the discovery there was a good deal of ill-feeling, which was accentuated by two Russians escaping in much the same manner an hour later, but they were recaptured.

could have reached the place. We had such a long way to go, and so little food considering the distance. But we could not bring ourselves to risk so much so soon after getting our liberty. "It is doubtful anyhow," we said, "whether it would be a judicious move; let's have a week's freedom at any rate before we take so great a risk." Considering the nature of the country, we thought we had an excellent chance of not being caught till our food ran out, if we took every precaution and had no bad luck. It was so extraordinarily pleasant to be free men once more, if only for a short time.

*First Night.*—This was entirely without incident; we marched by compass, mainly by tracks through pine forests, and frequently caught sight of the lights of Nuremberg on our left. Just before dawn we lay up in a pleasant coppice a hundred yards or so from the edge of a quiet country road. We took the precaution of sprinkling some pepper on our tracks where we entered the wood, and thus, to some extent guarded against stray dogs, we felt pretty secure. The day seemed intolerably long from 4 30 a m till 9 30 p m.—seventeen hours; the sun was very hot and there was very little shade, and we were impatient to get on. Our water-bottles too held insufficient water: we only had about one and a quarter pint between us, Buckley having a small flask and

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I a watertight tobacco tin Throughout the journey I think it was the weariness of lying up for seventeen hours, rather than the fatigue of the six to seven hours' march at night, which wore out not only our nerves but our physical strength. At no time of any day could we be free from anxiety. The strain of passing through a village where a few lights still burnt, or crossing a bridge where we expected to be challenged at any moment, never worried me so much, under the friendly cover of night, as a cart passing or men talking near our hiding-place ^

The general routine which we got into after about the third day out was as follows —We went into our hiding-place at dawn or shortly after, that is to say, between 4.30 and 5.15, and after taking off our boots and putting on dry socks we both dropped asleep instantly. This may seem a dangerous thing to have done. One of us ought always to have been awake. But the risk we ran in this way was very small indeed, and the benefit we got from that first sound sleep, while we were still warm from walking, was so great that we deliberately took whatever risk there was. It was almost non-existent. Nothing ever seemed to stir in the country-side till after 6.30. During the rest of the day one of us always remained awake. After half an hour's sleep we would wake shivering, for the mornings were very cold, and

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we were usually wet from the dew up to our waists. Then we had breakfast—the great moment of the day. At the beginning rations were pretty good, as I under-estimated the time we should take by about four days. To begin with, I thought we should come within range of our maps on the third night, but we did not get on them till the fifth. Half a pound of chocolate, two small biscuits, a small slice of raw bacon, six oxo cubes and about ten tiny meat lozenges and a few Horlick's malted milk lozenges—this was the full ration for the day. We never had more than this, and very soon had to cut it down a good deal. We varied this diet with compressed raisins, cheese, or raw rice instead of the meat or chocolate. The oxo cubes and half the chocolate we almost always took during the night, dissolving the former in our water-flasks. Later on, when things began to look very serious from the food point of view, we helped things out with raw potatoes, but I will come to that later on. On the first day we took careful stock of our food, which we redistributed and packed; and then decided—

- (1) that we had at a guess about 200 miles to walk;
- (2) that we would make for the German Swiss and not the Austrian Swiss frontier;

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- (3) that we would walk with the utmost precaution and not take a train or try to jump a train till we were at the end of our tether, C-
- (4) that by walking round Nuremberg we should be sure to hit a good road taking us south or south-west;
- (5) that we would not start to walk before 9 30 in the open country, or 9 45 if there were villages in the neighbourhood (we broke this rule twice, and it nearly finished the expedition each time);
- (6) that we would never walk through a village before 11 p.m. if we could help it;
- (7) last, but not least, that we would always take the counsel of the more cautious of the two at any moment.

A very large percentage of the officers in the fort where we had been prisoners for the last six months had made attempts and had marched through Germany towards different frontiers for periods varying from a few hours to three or four weeks, so that we had a great quantity of accumulated experience to help us. For instance—contrary to what one would naturally suppose—it was safest and quickest to walk along railways—especially if you could answer with a word or two of German to anyone who shouted to you. And there was the additional advantage that the



chance of losing the way along a railway was very small.

*Second Night.*—We started from our hiding place about 9 30 p.m. and made our way for a mile or two across country and through woods, going with quite unnecessary caution till we hit a decent road going south, soon after ten o'clock.

After walking fast along this for an hour or so we were going up a steepish hill when Buckley complained of feeling very tired. This was a bad start, but after resting a few minutes he was strong enough to go on and gradually got better towards the end of the night. From there onwards it was Buckley who was on the whole the stronger walker, at least he had most spare energy, which showed itself in these little extra exertions which mean so much—such as climbing a few yards down a river bank to get water for both, and being the first to suggest starting again after a rest. Of course we varied, and sometimes I and sometimes he was the stronger—and there is no doubt that between us we made much better progress than either one of us could have done alone. About 11 30 we got rather unexpectedly into a large village and had to walk boldly through the middle of it. There were one or two people about, but no one stopped or questioned us. A little later we crossed a railway which ran slightly south of west, and hesitated whether to take it on the

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chance of hitting a branch line leading south, but we decided to stick to the road. An hour or so later, however, the road itself turned almost due west, and we were forced to take a poor side road, which gradually developed into a track and then became more and more invisible till it lost itself and us in the heart of a pine forest. We then marched by compass, following rides which led in a south or south-west direction

I afterwards found out by studying the map that there are no main roads or railways leading in a south or south-west direction through that bit of country. Time after time during the first five nights we were compelled to take side roads which led nowhere in particular, and we found ourselves tripping over hop-poles and wires, or in private property, or in the middle of forests. Towards five o'clock we were getting to the edge of this piece of forest, and lay up in a thick piece of undergrowth and heather—a very pleasant spot, though we were rather short of water, not having found any in the forest. The day, a very hot one, passed without incident, though several carts and people passed within 25 yards of our hiding-place

*Fifteenth Night.*—Soon after starting we saw a gang of a dozen or more Russian prisoners escorted by a sentry. They were about 100 yards off and took no notice of us. After walking for

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about half an hour an incident occurred which was perhaps the most unpleasant one we experienced, and the fact that we extricated ourselves so easily was entirely due to Buckley's presence of mind. Coming round a corner, we saw ahead of us a man in soldier's uniform cutting grass with a scythe at the side of the road. To turn back would rouse suspicion. There was nothing for it but to walk past him. As we were opposite to him he looked up and said something to us which we did not catch. We answered "Good evening," as usual. But he called after us again the same words, in some South German dialect, I think, for neither of us could make out what he said, so we walked on without taking any notice. Then he shouted "Halt! Halt!" and ran down the road after us with the scythe. It was an unpleasant situation, especially as we caught sight at that moment of a man with a gun on his shoulder about 50 yards away from us on our right. There was still half an hour to go before it would be quite dark, and we were both of us too weak to run very fast or far. There was only one thing to do, and we did it. In haughty surprise we turned round and waited for him. When he was only a few yards away, Buckley, speaking in a voice quivering with indignation, asked him what the devil, etc., he meant by calling "Halt!" to us; and I added something about a South German

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pig dog in an undertone. The man almost let drop his scythe from astonishment, and turning round walked slowly back to the side of the road and started cutting grass again. We turned on our heels and marched off, pleased with being so well out of a great danger, and angry with ourselves that we had ever been such fools as to run into it. We passed one more man in the daylight, but ostentatiously spoke German to each other as we passed him, and he took no notice.

Before dark we saw other gangs of Russian prisoners

About 11 p.m. we got on the railway again, and walked without incident for the rest of the night. Owing to the gap in our maps, previously referred to, being longer than we expected, it was not till well after midnight that we passed through Pfullendorf and realized that we still had another two nights' march before we could hope to cross the frontier. It was not so much the walking at night which we minded, though we were both weak and weary, it was the long lying up in the day time which had become almost unendurable. For eighteen long hours we had to lie still, and were able to think of little else but food, and realize our intense hunger

When I saw the name Pfullendorf written in huge letters in the station, I felt a very pleasant

thrill of satisfied curiosity and anticipated triumph. We had always called this railway the "Pfullendorf railway," and in the past months I had often imagined myself walking along this railway and passing through this station, only a day's march from the frontier. For the last two nights and for the rest of the journey my feet had become numbed, and the pain was very much less acute. This made a vast difference to my energy and cheerfulness. So much so that for the last four nights I did the march with less fatigue than Buckley, who seemed to be suffering more than I was from lack of food. I have already mentioned that we divided up the food, and each carried and ate at his own discretion the food for the last three days. When Buckley opened his last packet of chocolate, it was found to contain less than we had expected. I offered a redivision. Buckley, however, refused. I think myself that the quantity of food in question was too small to have affected in any way our relative powers of endurance. Ever since we found potatoes Buckley had eaten more of them than I had, and when we were unable to find any, he felt the lack of them more than I did. Just before dawn we climbed off the railway embankment to a small stream. Here I insisted on having a wash as well as a drink. Buckley grumbled at the delay, but I think the wash did us both good. Soon after-

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wards, about 4 30 a.m., we came on an excellent hiding-place. Buckley wanted to push on for another half an hour, but I considered that a good hiding-place so close to the frontier was all-important, and he gave in. As we were just getting comfortable for our before-breakfast sleep I found that I had left my wrist compass behind at the place where we had washed. I determined to walk back and fetch it, as it was an illuminated compass and might be indispensable in the next two nights. That I was able to do this short extra walk with ease and at great speed—I even got into a run at one point—shows how much fitter and stronger I was now that my feet had ceased to hurt me. Our hiding-place was in a very thick plantation of young fir trees, and we were quite undisturbed. The place was so thick that when I crawled off 10 yards from Buckley I was unable to find him again for some time, and did not dare to call to him.

*Sixteenth Night.*—Starting about 10 15 we followed the railway as it turned south towards Stokach near the west end of Lake Constance. Just before midnight we struck off south-westwards from the railway. We soon found that we had branched off too early, and got entangled in a village where a fierce dog, luckily on a long chain, sprang at us and barked for twenty minutes after we had passed. Later we passed a man smoking

a cigarette, and caught a whiff of smoke, which was indescribably delicious, as we had been out of tobacco for more than a fortnight.

A couple of hours' walk, steering by compass by small paths in thick woods, brought us into the main road to Engen. Some of the villages, such as Nenzingen, we avoided, walking round them through the crops, a tiring and very wet job, besides wasting much time. At about 4.30 we were confronted with the village of Rigelingen, which, being on a river, was almost impossible to "turn," so we walked through it, gripping our sticks and prepared to run at any moment. However, though there were a few lights showing, we saw no one.

About five o'clock we got into an excellent and safe hiding-place on a steep bank above the road. A mile or so down the road to the west of us was the village of Aach, and we were less than 15 kilometres from the frontier.

We determined to eat the remains of our food and cross that night. I kept, however, about twenty small meat lozenges, for which, as will be seen later on, we were extremely thankful. During our last march we decided that we must walk on the roads as little as possible. Any infantry soldier knows that a cross-country night march on a very dark night over ten miles of absolutely strange country with the object of coming on a

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particular village at the end, is an undertaking of great difficulty.

We had an illuminated compass, but our only methods of reading a map by night (by the match-light, with the help of a waterproof, as I have previously explained) made it inadvisable to use a map so close to the frontier more often than was absolutely necessary. I therefore learnt the map by heart, and made Buckley, rather against his will, do so too. We had to remember some such rigmarole as: "From cross roads 300 yards—S W road, railway, river—S to solitary hill on left with village ahead, turn village (Weiterdingen) to left—road S W. 500 yards—E round base of solitary hill," etc, etc. Our anxieties were increased by two facts—one being that all the sign-posts within ten miles of the frontier had been removed, so that if once we lost our way there seemed little prospect of finding it again on a dark night; secondly, the moon rose about midnight, and it was therefore most important, though perhaps not essential, to attempt to cross the frontier before that hour. We left behind us our bags, our spare clothes and socks, so as to walk as light as possible, and at about 9.30 left our hiding-place.

*Seventeenth Night*—The first part of our walk lay through the thick woods north of Aach, in which there was small chance of meeting anyone



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For two hours on a pitch-dark night we made our way across country, finding the way only by compass and memory of the maps. There were moments of anxiety, but these were instantly allayed by the appearance of some expected landmark. Unfortunately the going was very heavy, and in our weak state we made slower progress than we had hoped. When the moon came up we were still three to four miles from the frontier.

Should we lie up where we were and try to get across the next night? The idea of waiting another day entirely without food was intolerable, so we pushed on.

The moon was full and very bright, so that, as we walked across the fields it seemed to us that we must be visible for miles. After turning the village of Weiterdingen we were unable to find a road on the far side which had been marked on my map. This necessitated a study of the map under a mackintosh, the result of which was to make me feel doubtful if we really were where I had thought. It is by no means easy to locate oneself at night from a small-scale map, 1 : 100,000, examined by match-light. However, we adopted the hypothesis that we were where we had thought we were, and disregarding the unpleasant fact that a road was missing, marched on by compass, in a south-west direction, hoping always to hit the village of Riedheim. How we were to distinguish

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this village from other villages I did not know. Buckley, as always, was an optimist; so on we went, keeping as far as possible under the cover of trees and hedges.

Ahead of us was a valley, shrouded in a thick mist. This might well be the frontier, which at that point followed a small stream on either side of which we believed there were water meadows. At length we came on a good road, and walking parallel with it in the fields, we followed it westwards. If our calculations were correct, this should lead us to the village.

About 1.30 we came on a village. It was a pretty place nestling at the foot of a steep wood-capped hill, with fruit trees and fields, in which harvesting had already begun, all round it. Was it Riedheim? If it was, we were within half a mile of the frontier, and I knew, or thought I knew, from a large-scale map which I had memorized, the lie of the country between Riedheim and the frontier. We crossed the road, and after going about 100 yards came on a single-line railway. I sat down aghast. There was no doubt about it—we were lost. I knew there was no railway near Riedheim. For a moment or two Buckley failed to realize the horrible significance of this railway, but he threw a waterproof over my head whilst I had a prolonged study of the map by match-light. I was quite unable to make

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out where we were. There were, however, one or two villages, through which railways passed, within range of our night's walk. I explained the situation to Buckley, who instantly agreed that we must lie up for another night and try to make out where we were in the morning. It was impossible that we were far from the frontier. Buckley at this time began to show signs of exhaustion from lack of food, so leaving him to collect potatoes, of which there was a field quite close, I went in search of water. After a long search I was not able to find any. We collected thirty to forty potatoes between us, and towards 3 a.m. made our way up the hill behind the village. The hill was very steep, and in our exhausted condition it was only slowly and with great difficulty that we were able to climb it. Three-quarters of the way up, Buckley almost collapsed, so I left him in some bushes and went on to find a suitable place. I found an excellent spot in a thick wood, in which there were no paths or signs that anyone entered it. I then returned and fetched Buckley, and we slept till dawn.

At this time I was feeling fitter and stronger than at any time during the previous week. I am unable to explain this, unless it was due to the fact that my feet had quite ceased to hurt me seriously.

At dawn we had breakfast on raw potatoes and

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meat lozenges which I divided out, and then, sitting just inside the edge of the coppice, tried to make out our position from a close study of the map and the surrounding country. In the distance we could see the west end of Lake Constance, and a compass bearing on this showed us that we were very close to the frontier. Through the village in front of us there was a railway. There were several villages close to the frontier through which passed railways, and two or three of them had steep hills to the north of them. We imagined successively that the hill we were sitting on was the hill behind each of these villages, and compared the country we could see before us carefully with the map. That part of the country abounds in solitary hills capped with woods, and the difficulty was to find out which one we were sitting on. There was one village, Gottmadingen, with a railway through it, and behind it a hill from which the map showed that the view would be almost identical with that we saw in front of us. Buckley thought we were there. I did not. There were small but serious discrepancies. Then I had a brain wave. We were in Switzerland already, and the village below us was Thalingen. It explained everything—or very nearly. Buckley pointed out one or two things which did not seem to be quite right. Again then, where were we? I think now that we were slightly insane from

## REAL ADVENTURE

hunger and fatigue, otherwise we should have realized without difficulty where we were, without taking the risk which we did. I don't know what time it was, but it was not till after hours of futile attempt to locate ourselves from the map from three sides of the hill, that I took off my tunic, and in a grey sweater and in grey flannel trousers walked down into the fields and asked a girl who was making hay what the name of that village might be. She was a pretty girl in a large sun-bonnet, and after a few preliminary remarks about the weather and the harvest, she told me the name of the village was Riedheim. I must have shown my surprise, for she said, "Why, don't you believe me?" "Naturally, I believe you," I said; "it is better here than in the trenches I am on leave and have walked over from Engen and lost my way. Good day. Many thanks" She gave me a sly look, and I don't know what she thought, but she only answered "Good day," and went on with her hay-making. I walked away, and getting out of her sight hurried back to Buckley with the good news. "But how could a railway be there?" I thought "It was made after the map was printed, you fool." On the way back I had a good look at the country. It was all as clear as daylight. How I had failed to recognize it before I can't think, except that it did not look a bit like the country that I had anticipated

## WE ESCAPE

There was the Z-shaped stream, which was the guarded frontier, and there, now that I knew where to look for it, I could make out the flash of the sun on a sentry's bayonet. Everything fitted in with my mental picture of the large-scale map. The village opposite to us in Switzerland was Barzheim, the little hut with a red roof was the Swiss Alpine Club hut, and was actually on the border between Switzerland and Germany. Once past the sentries on the river we should still have 500 yards of Germany to cross before we were safe.

The thing to do now was to hide, and hide in the thickest part we could find. The girl might have given us away. Anyhow, we knew that the woods near the frontier were usually searched daily. Till four o'clock we lay quiet, well hidden in thick undergrowth, half-way up the lower slopes of the Hohenstollen, and then we heard a man pushing his way through the woods and hitting trees and bushes with a stick. He never saw us, and we were lying much too close to see him, though he seemed to come within 15 yards of us. That danger past, I climbed a tree and took one more look at the lie of the land. Then Buckley and I settled down to get our operation orders for the night. For half an hour we sat on the edge of the wood, waiting for it to become quite dark before we started.

## REAL ADVENTURE

*Eighteenth and last Night*—It was quite dark at 10 15 when we started, and we had one and three-quarter hours in which to cross. Shortly after midnight the moon would rise. "I can hardly believe we are really going to get across," said Buckley. "I know I am, and so are you," I answered. We left our sticks behind, because they would interfere with our crawling, and rolled our Burberrys tightly on our backs with string.

A quarter of an hour's walk brought us to the railway and the road, which we crossed with the greatest care. For a short distance in the water-meadow we walked bent double, then we went on our hands and knees, and for the rest of the way we crawled. There was thick long grass in the meadow, and it was quite hard work pushing our way through it on our hands and knees. The night was an absolutely still one, and as we passed through the grass it seemed to us that we made a swishing noise that must be heard for hundreds of yards.

There were some very accommodating dry ditches, which for the most part ran in the right direction. By crawling down these we were able to keep our heads below the level of the grass nearly the whole time, only glancing up from time to time to get our direction by the poplars. After what seemed an endless time, but was actually about three-quarters of an hour, we

## WE ESCAPE

reached a road which we believed was patrolled, as it was here that I had seen the flash of a bayonet in the day time

After looking round cautiously we crossed this, and crawled on—endlessly, it seemed.

Buckley relieved me, and took the lead for a bit. Then we changed places again, and the next time I looked up the poplars really did seem a bit nearer.

Then Buckley whispered to me, "Hurry up, the moon's rising." I looked back towards the east, and saw the edge of the moon peering over the hills. We were still about 100 yards from the stream. We will get across now, even if we have to fight for it, I thought, and crawled on at top speed. Suddenly I felt a hand on my heel, and stopped and looked back. Buckley pointed ahead, and there, about 15 yards off, was a sentry walking along a footpath on the bank of the stream. He appeared to have no rifle, and had probably just been relieved from his post. He passed without seeing us. One last spurt and we were in the stream (it was only a few feet broad), and up the other bank. "Crawl," said Buckley. "Run," said I, and we ran. After 100 yards we stopped exhausted. "I believe we've done it, old man," I said. "Come on," said Buckley, "we're not there yet." For ten minutes we walked at top speed in a semicircle, and at length hit a road

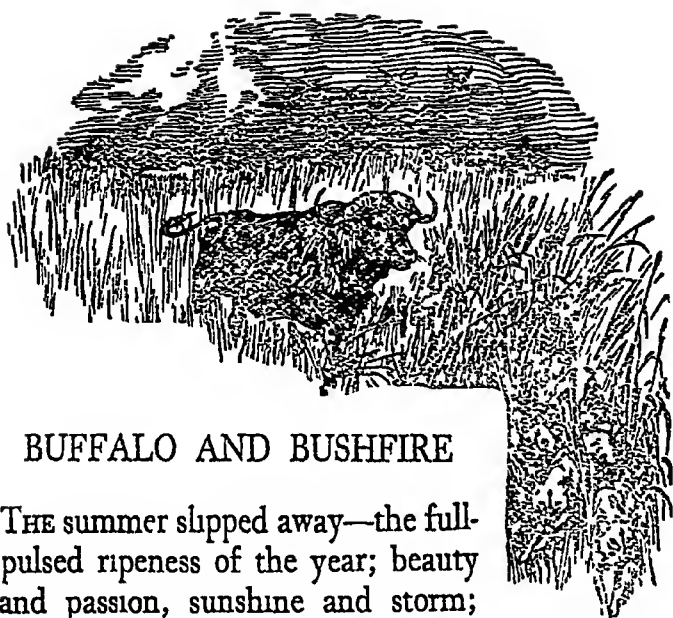


## REAL ADVENTURE

which I knew must lead to Barzheim. On it, there was a big board on a post. On examination this proved to be a boundary post, and we stepped into Switzerland, feeling a happiness and a triumph such, I firmly believe, as few men even in this war have felt, though they may have deserved the feeling many times more.

We crossed into Switzerland at about 12.30 a.m. on the morning of 9th June, 1917.

A J EVANS—*The Escaping Club*



## BUFFALO AND BUSHFIRE

THE summer slipped away—the full-pulsed ripeness of the year; beauty and passion, sunshine and storm; long spells of peace and gentleness, of springing life and radiant glory; short intervals of reckless tempest and destructive storm! Among the massed evergreens of the woods there stood out here and there bright spots of colour, the careless dabs from Nature's artist hand, yellow and brown, orange and crimson, all vividly distinct, yet all in perfect harmony. The rivers, fed from the replenished mountains' stores, ran full but clear; the days were bright; the nights were cold, the grass was rank and seeding, and it was time to go.

Once more the Bushveld beckoned us away.

## REAL ADVENTURE

We picked a spot where grass and water were good, and waited for the rivers to fall; and it was while loitering there that a small hunting party from the fields making for the Sabi came across us and camped for the night. In the morning two of our party joined them for a few days to try for something big

It was too early in the season for really good sport. The rank tropical grass—six to eight feet high in most places, twelve to fourteen in some—was too green to burn yet, and the stout stems and heavy seed heads made walking as difficult as in a field of tangled sugar cane; for long stretches it was not possible to see five yards, and the dew in the early mornings was so heavy that after a hundred yards of such going one was drenched to the skin.

We were forced into the more open parts—the higher, stonier, more barren ground where just then the bigger game was by no means plentiful.

On the third day two of us started out to try a new quarter in the hilly country rising towards the Berg. My companion, Francis, was an experienced hunter, and his idea was that we should find the big game, not on the hot humid flats or the stony rises, but still higher up on the breezy hill tops or in the cool shady kloofs running towards the mountains. We passed a quantity of

## A BUSH FIRE

smaller game that morning, and several times heard the stampede of big animals—wildebeeste and waterbuck, as we found by the spoor—but it was absolutely impossible to see them. The dew was so heavy that even our hats were soaking wet, and times out of number we had to stop to wipe the water out of our eyes in order to see our way; a complete ducking would not have made the least difference

Jock fared better than we did, finding openings and game tracks at his own level, which were of no use to us, he also knew better than we did what was going on ahead, and it was tantalizing in the extreme to see him slow down and stand with his nose thrown up, giving quick soft sniffs and ranging his head from side to side, when he knew there was something quite close, and knew too that a few more toiling steps in that rank grass would be followed by a rush of something which we would never see.

Once we heard a foot stamp not twenty yards off, and stood for a couple of minutes on tiptoe trying to pierce the screen of grass in front, absolutely certain that eyes and ears were turned on us in death-like silence waiting for the last little proof of the intruder that would satisfy their owners and start them off before we could get a glimpse. The silence must have made them suspicious, for at some signal unknown to us the troop broke away

## REAL ADVENTURE

and we had the mortification to see something, which we had ignored as a branch, tilt slowly back and disappear · there was no mistaking the koodoo bull's horns once they moved!

After two hours of this we struck a stream, and there we made somewhat better pace and less noise, often taking to the bed of the creek for easier going. There, too, we found plenty of drinking places and plenty of fresh spoor of the bigger game, and as the hills began to rise in view above the bush and trees, we found what Francis was looking for. Something caught his eye on the far side of the stream, and he waded in. I followed, and when half-way through saw the contented look on his face and caught his words: "Buffalo! I thought so!"

We sat down then to think it out. The spoor told of a troop of a dozen to sixteen animals—bulls, cows, and calves; and it was that morning's spoor: even in the soft, moist ground at the stream's edge the water had not yet oozed into most of the prints. Fortunately there was a light breeze from the hills, and as it seemed probable that in any case they would make that way for the hot part of the day, we decided to follow for some distance on the track and then make for the likeliest poort in the hills. *Plains*

The buffalo had come up from the low country in the night on a course striking the creek diagon-

## A BUSH FIRE

ally in the drinking place, their departing spoor went off at a slight tangent from the stream—the two trails making a very wide angle at the drinking place and confirming the idea that after their night's feed in the rich grass lower down they were making for the hills again in the morning and had touched at the stream to drink

Jock seemed to gather from our whispered conversation and silent movements that there was work to hand, and his eyes moved from one face to the other as we talked, much as a child watches the faces in a conversation it cannot quite follow. When we got up and began to move along the trail, he gave one of his little sideways bounds, as if he half thought of throwing a somersault and restrained himself, and then with several approving waggings of his tail settled down at once to business.

Jock went in front: it was best so, and quite safe, for, whilst certain to spot anything long before we could, there was not the least risk of his rushing it or making any noise. The slightest whisper of a "Hst" from me would have brought him to a breathless standstill at any moment, but even this was not likely to be needed, for he kept as close a watch on my face as I did on him.

There was, of course, no difficulty whatever in following the spoor, the animals were as big as cattle, and their trail through the rank grass was

## REAL ADVENTURE

as plain as a road: our difficulty was to get near enough to see them without being heard. Under the down-trodden grass there were plenty of dry sticks to step on, any of which would have been as fatal to our chances as a pistol shot, and even the unavoidable rustle of the grass might betray us while the buffalo themselves remained hidden. Thus our progress was very slow, a particularly troublesome impediment being the grass stems thrown down across the trail by the animals crossing and re-crossing each other's spoor and stopping to crop a mouthful here and there or perhaps to play. The tambookie grass in these parts has a stem thicker than a lead pencil, more like young bamboo than grass; and these stems thrown cross-ways by storms or game make an entanglement through which the foot cannot be forced: it means high stepping all the time.

We expected to follow the spoor for several miles before coming on the buffalo—probably right into the kloof towards which it appeared to lead—but were, nevertheless, quite prepared to drop on to them at any moment, knowing well how game will loiter on their way when undisturbed and vary their time and course, instinctively avoiding the too regular habits which would make them an easy prey.

Jock moved steadily along the trodden track, sliding easily through the grass or jumping softly

## A BUSH FIRE

and noiselessly over impediments, and we followed, looking ahead as far as the winding course of the trail permitted

To right and left of us stood the screen of tall grass, bush and trees. Once Jock stopped, throwing up his nose, and stood for some seconds while we held our breath; but having satisfied himself that there was nothing of immediate consequence, he moved on again—rather more slowly, as it appeared to us. I looked at Francis's face; it was pale and set like marble, and his watchful grey eyes were large and wide like an antelope's, as though opened out to take in everything, and those moments of intense interest and expectation were the best part of a memorable day.

There was something near: we felt it! Jock was going more carefully than ever, with his head up most of the time, and the feeling of expectation grew stronger and stronger until it amounted to absolute certainty. Then Jock stopped, stopped in mid-stride, not with his nose up ranging for scent, but with head erect, ears cocked, and tail poised—dead still—he was looking at something.

We had reached the end of the grass where the bush and trees of the mountain slope had choked it out, and before us there was fairly thick bush mottled with black shadows and patches of bright sunlight in which it was most difficult to see anything. There we stood like statues, the dog in



front with the two men abreast behind him, and all peering intently. Twice Jock slowly turned his head and looked into my eyes, and I felt keenly the sense of hopeless inferiority. "There it is, what are you going to do?" was what the first look seemed to say; and the second: "Well, what are you waiting for?"

How long we stood thus it is not possible to say: time is no measure of such things, and to me it seemed unending suspense; but we stood our ground scarcely breathing, knowing that something was there, because he saw it and told us so, and knowing that as soon as we moved it would be gone. Then close to the ground there was a movement—something swung, and the full picture flashed upon us. It was a buffalo calf standing in the shade of a big bush with its back towards us, and it was the swishing of the tail that had betrayed it. We dared not breathe a word or pass a look—a face turned might have caught some glint of light and shown us up, so we stood like statues, each knowing that the other was looking for the herd and would fire when he got a chance at one of the full-grown animals.

My eyes were strained and burning from the intensity of the effort to see; but except the calf I could not make out a living thing: the glare of the yellow grass in which we stood, and the sun-spotted darkness beyond it beat me.

## A BUSH FIRE

At last, in the corner of my eye, I saw Francis's rifle rise, as slowly—almost—as the mercury in a warmed thermometer. There was a long pause, and then came the shot and wild snorts of alarm and rage. A dozen huge black forms started into life for a second and as quickly vanished—scattering and crashing through the jungle.

The first clear impression was that of Jock, who after one swift run forward for a few yards stood ready to spring off in pursuit, looking back at me and waiting for the word to go; but at the sign of my raised hand, opened with palm towards him, he subsided slowly and lay down flat with his head resting on his paws

"Did you see?" asked Francis

"Not till you fired I heard it strike What was it?"

"Hanged if I know! I heard it too. It was one of the big uns; but bull or cow I don't know"

"Where did you get it?"

"Well, I couldn't make out more than a black patch in the bush. It moved once, but I couldn't see how it was standing—end on or across It may be hit anywhere. I took for the middle of the patch and let drive. Bit risky, eh?"

"Seems like taking chances"

"Well, it was no use waiting: we came for this!" and then he added with a careless laugh, "They always clear from the first shot if you get

'em at close quarters, but the fun'll begin now. Expect he'll lay for us in the track somewhere."

That is the way of the wounded buffalo—we all knew that; and old Rocky's advice came to mind with a good deal of point. "Keep cool and shoot straight—or stay right home"; and Jock's expectant, watchful look smote me with another memory—"It was my dawg! "

A few yards from where the buffalo had stood we picked up the blood spoor. There was not very much of it, but we saw from the marks on the bushes here and there, and more distinctly on some grass farther on, that the wound was pretty high up and on the right side. Crossing a small stretch of more open bush we reached the dense growth along the banks of the stream, and as this continued up into the kloof it was clear we had a tough job before us.

Animals when badly wounded nearly always leave the herd, and very often go down wind so as to be able to scent and avoid their pursuers. This fellow had followed the herd up wind, and that rather puzzled us.

A wounded buffalo in thick bush is considered to be about as nasty a customer as anyone may desire to tackle; for, its vindictive indomitable courage and extraordinary cunning are a very formidable combination, as a long list of fatalities bears witness. Its favourite device—so old hunters

## A BUSH FIRE

will tell you—is to make off down wind when hit, and after going for some distance, come back again in a semi-circle to intersect its own spoor, and there under good cover lie in wait for those who may follow up

This makes the sport quite as interesting as need be, for the chances are more nearly even than they generally are in hunting. The buffalo chooses the ground that suits its purpose of ambushing its enemy, and naturally selects a spot where concealment is possible; but, making every allowance for this, it seems little short of a miracle that the huge black beast is able to hide itself so effectually that it can charge from a distance of a dozen yards on to those who are searching for it.

The secret of it seems to lie in two things: first, absolute stillness; and second, breaking up the colour. No wild animal, except those protected by distance and open country, will stand against a background of light or of uniform colour, nor will it as a rule allow its own shape to form an unbroken patch against its chosen background.

They work on Nature's lines. Look at the ostrich—the cock, black and handsome, so strikingly different from the commonplace grey hen! Considering that for periods of six weeks at a stretch they are anchored to one spot hatching the eggs, turn and turn about, it seems that one or other must be an easy victim for the beast

of prey, since the same background cannot possibly suit both. But they know that too; so the grey hen sits by day, and the black cock by night! And the ostrich is not the fool it is thought to be—burying its head in the sand! Knowing how the long stem of a neck will catch the eye, it lays it flat on the ground, as other birds do, when danger threatens the nest or brood, and concealment is better than flight. That tame chicks will do this in a bare paddock is only a laughable assertion of instinct.

Look at the zebra! There is nothing more striking, nothing that arrests the eye more sharply—in the Zoo—than this vivid contrast of colour, yet in the bush the wavy stripes of black and white are a protection, enabling him to hide at will.

I have seen a wildebeeste effectually hidden by a single blighted branch; a koodoo bull, by a few twisty sticks; a crouching lion, by a wisp of feathery grass no higher than one's knee, no bigger than a vase of flowers! Yet, the marvel of it is always fresh.

After a couple of hundred yards of that sort of going, we changed our plan, taking to the creek again and making occasional cross-cuts to the trail, to be sure he was still ahead. It was certain then that the buffalo was following the herd and making for the poort, and as he had not stopped

## A BUSH FIRE

once on our account we took to the creek after the fourth cross-cut and made what pace we could to reach the narrow gorge where we reckoned to pick up the spoor again

There are, however, few short cuts—and no certainties—in hunting, when we reached the poort there was no trace to be found of the wounded buffalo, the rest of the herd had passed in, but we failed to find blood or other trace of the wounded one, and Jock was clearly as much at fault as we were.

We had overshot the mark and there was nothing for it but to hark back to the last blood spoor and, by following it up, find out what had happened. This took over an hour, for we spoorred him then with the utmost caution, being convinced that the buffalo, if not dead, was badly wounded and lying in wait for us

We came on his "stand," in a well-chosen spot, where the game path took a sharp turn round some heavy bushes. The buffalo had stood, not where one would naturally expect it—in the dense cover which seemed just suited for his purpose—but among lighter bush on the *opposite* side and about twenty yards nearer to us. There was no room for doubt about his hostile intentions, and when we recalled how we had instantly picked out the thick bush on the left—to the exclusion of everything else—as the spot to be watched, his selection

of more open ground on the other side, and nearer to us, seemed so fiendishly clever that it made one feel cold and creepy. One hesitates to say it was deliberately planned; yet—plan, instinct or accident—there was the fact. ^

The marks showed us he was badly hit; but there was no limb broken, and no doubt he was good for some hours yet. We followed along the spoor, more cautiously than ever; and when we reached the sharp turn beyond the thick bush we found that the path was only a few yards from the stream, so that on our way up the bed of the creek we had passed within twenty yards of where the buffalo was waiting for us. No doubt he had heard us then as we walked past, and had winded us later on when we got ahead of him into the poort.

What had he made of it? What had he done? Had he followed up to attack us? Was he waiting somewhere near? Or had he broken away into the bush on finding himself headed off? These were some of the questions we asked ourselves as we crept along.

Well! what he had done did not answer our questions. On reaching the poort again we found his spoor, freshly made since we had been there, and he had walked right along through the gorge without stopping again, and gone into the kloof beyond. Whether he had followed us up when

## A BUSH FIRE

we got ahead of him—hoping to stalk us from behind, or had gone ahead, expecting to meet us coming down wind to look for him; or, when he heard us pass down stream again—and, it may be, thought we had given up pursuit—had simply walked on after the herd, were questions never answered

A breeze had risen since morning, and as we approached the hills it grew stronger: in the poort itself it was far too strong for our purpose—the wind coming through the narrow opening like a forced draught. The herd would not stand there, and it was not probable that the wounded animal would stop until he joined the others or reached a more sheltered place. We were keen on the chase, and as he had about an hour's start on us and it was already midday, there was no time to waste.

Inside the poort the kloof opened out into a big valley away to our left—our left being the right bank of the stream—and bordering the valley on that side there were many miles of timbered kloofs and green slopes, with a few Kafir kraals visible in the distance; but to the right the formation was quite different, and rather peculiar. The stream—known to the natives as Hlamba-Nyati, or Buffalo's Bathing Place—had in the course of time shortened its course to the poort by eating into the left bank, thus leaving a high, and in



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most places, inaccessible terrace above it on the left side and a wide stretch of flat alluvium on the right. This terrace was bounded on one side by the steep bank of the creek and walled in on the other side by the precipitous kranses of the mountains. At the top end it opened out like a fan which died away in a frayed edge in the numberless small kloofs and spurs fringing the amphitheatre of the hills. The shape was in fact something like the human arm and hand with the fingers outspread. The elbow was the poort, the arm the terrace—except that the terrace was irregularly curved—and the fingers the small kloofs in the mountains. No doubt the haunts of the buffalo were away in the “fingers,” and we worked steadily along the spoor in that direction.

Game paths were numerous and very irregular, and the place was a perfect jungle of trees, bush, bramble and the tallest rankest grass. I have ridden in that valley many times since then through grass standing several feet above my head. It was desperately hard work, but we did want to get the buffalo; and although the place was full of game and we put up koodoo, wildebeeste, rietbuck, bushbuck, and duiker, we held to the wounded buffalo's spoor, neglecting all else.

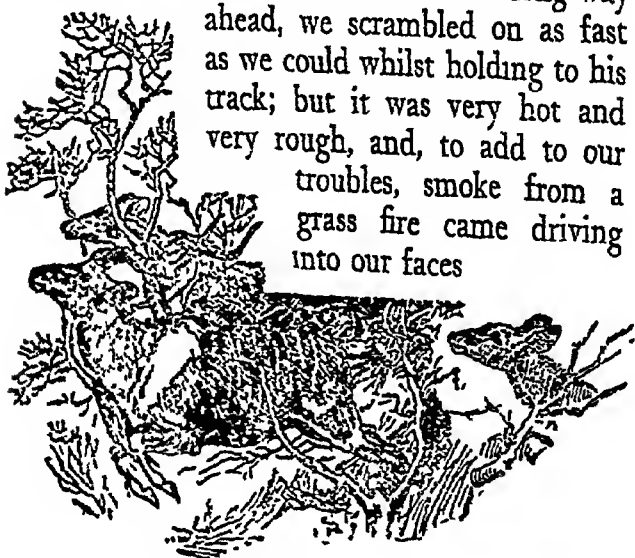
Just before ascending the terrace we had heard

## A BUSH FIRE

the curious far-travelling sound of Kafirs calling to each other from a distance, but, except for a passing comment, paid no heed to it and passed on, later we heard it again and again, and at last, when we happened to pause in a more open portion of the bush after we had gone half-way along the terrace, the calling became so frequent and came from so many quarters that we stopped to take note. Francis, who spoke Zulu like one of themselves, at last made out a word or two which gave the clue.

"They're after the wounded buffalo!" he said "Come on, man, before they get their dogs, or we'll never see him again."

Knowing then that the buffalo was a long way ahead, we scrambled on as fast as we could whilst holding to his track; but it was very hot and very rough, and, to add to our troubles, smoke from a grass fire came driving into our faces



## REAL ADVENTURE

"Niggers burning on the slopes; confound them!" Francis growled.

They habitually fire the grass in patches during the summer and autumn, as soon as it is dry enough to burn, in order to get young grass for the winter or the early spring, and although the smoke worried us there did not seem to be anything unusual about the fire. But ten minutes later we stopped again; the smoke was perceptibly thicker; birds were flying past us down wind, with numbers of locusts and other insects; two or three times we heard buck and other animals break back; and all were going the same way. Then the same thought struck us both—it was stamped in our faces: this was no ordinary mountain grass fire: it was the bush.

Francis was a quiet fellow, one of the sort it is well not to rouse. His grave is in the Bushveld where his unbeaten record among intrepid lion-hunters was made, and where he fell in the war, leaving another and greater record to his name. The blood rose slowly to his face, until it was brick red, and he looked an ugly customer as he said.

"The black brutes have fired the valley to burn him out. Come on quick. We must get out of this on to the slopes!"

We did not know then that there were no slopes—only a precipitous face of rock with dense

## A BUSH FIRE

jungle to the foot of it, and after we had spent a quarter of an hour in that effort, we found our way blocked by the krans and a tangle of undergrowth much worse than that in the middle of the terrace. The noise made by the wind in the trees and our struggling through the grass and bush had prevented our hearing the fire at first, but now its ever growing roar drowned all sounds. Ordinarily, there would have been no real difficulty in avoiding a bush fire; but, pinned in between the river and the precipice and with miles of dense bush behind us, it was not at all pleasant

Had we turned back even then and made for the poort it is possible we might have travelled faster than the fire, but it would have been rough work indeed; moreover, that would have been going back—and we did want to get the buffalo—so we decided to make one more try, towards the river this time. It was not much of a try, however, and we had gone no farther than the middle of the terrace again when it became alarmingly clear that this fire meant business

The wind increased greatly, as it always does once a bush fire gets a start, the air was thick with smoke, and full of flying things; in the bush and grass about us there was a constant scurrying; the terror of stampede was in the very atmosphere. A few words of consultation decided us, and we

started to burn a patch for standing room and protection

The hot sun and strong wind had long evaporated all the dew and moisture from the grass, but the sap was still up, and the fire—our fire—seemed cruelly long in catching on. With bunches of dry grass for brands we started burns in twenty places over a length of a hundred yards, and each little flame licked up, spread a little, and then hesitated or died out: it seemed as if ours would never take, while the other came on with roars and leaps, sweeping clouds of sparks and ash over us in the dense rolling mass of smoke

At last a fierce rush of wind struck down on us, and in a few seconds each little flame became a living demon of destruction, another minute, and the stretch before us was a field of swaying flame. There was a sudden roar and crackle, as of musketry, and the whole mass seemed lifted into the air in one blazing sheet: it simply leaped into life and swept everything before it.

When we opened our scorched eyes the ground in front of us was all black, with only here and there odd lights and torches dotted about—like tapers on a pall; and on ahead, beyond the trellis-work of bare scorched trees, the wall of flame swept on.

Then down on the wings of the wind came the

## A BUSH FIRE

other fire; and before it fled every living thing. Heaven only knows what passed us in those few minutes when a broken stream of terrified creatures dashed by, hardly swerving to avoid us. There is no coherent picture left of that scene—just a medley of impressions linked up by flashes of unforgettable vividness. A herd of koodoo came crashing by; I know there was a herd, but only the first and last will come to mind—the space between seems blurred. The clear impressions are of the koodoo bull in front, with nose out-thrust, eyes shut against the bush, and great horns laid back upon the withers, as he swept along opening the way for his herd; and then, as they vanished, the big ears, ewe neck, and tilting hind-quarters of the last cow—between them nothing but a mass of moving grey!

The wildebeeste went by in Indian file, uniform in shape, colour and horns; and strangely uniform in their mechanical action, lowered heads, and fiercely determined rush



## REAL ADVENTURE

A rietbuck ram stopped close to us, looked back wide-eyed and anxious, and whistled shrilly, and then cantered on with head erect and white tail flapping; but its mate neither answered nor came by. A terrified hare with its ears laid flat scuttled past within a yard of Francis and did not seem to see him. Above us scared birds swept or fluttered down wind; while others again came up swirling and swinging about, darting boldly through the smoke to catch the insects driven before the fire.

But what comes back with the suggestion of infinitely pathetic helplessness is the picture of a beetle. We stood on the edge of our burn, waiting for the ground to cool, and at my feet a pair of tock-tockie beetles, hump-backed and bandy-legged, came toiling slowly and earnestly along; they reached the edge of our burn, touched the warm ash, and turned patiently aside—to walk round it!

A school of chattering monkeys raced out on to the blackened flat, and screamed shrilly with terror as the hot earth and cinders burnt their feet.

Porcupine, antbear, meerkat! They are vague, so vague that nothing is left but the shadow of their passing, but there is one other thing—seen in a flash as brief as the others, for a second or two only, but never to be forgotten! Out of the

## A BUSH FIRE

yellow grass, high up in the waving tops, came sailing down on us the swaying head and glittering eyes of a black mamba—swiftest, most vicious, most deadly of snakes. Francis and I were not five yards apart and it passed between us, giving a quick, chilly, beady look at each—pitiless and hateful—and one hiss as the slithering tongue shot out: that was all, and it sailed past with strange effortless movement. How much of the body was on the ground propelling it, I cannot even guess, but we had to look upwards to see the head as the snake passed between us.

The scorching breath of the fire drove us before it on to the baked ground, inches deep in ashes and glowing cinders, where we kept marking time to ease our blistering feet, our hats were pulled down to screen our necks as we stood with our backs to the coming flames, our flannel shirts were so hot that we kept shifting our shoulders for relief. Jock, who had no screen and whose feet had no protection, was in my arms, and we strove to shield ourselves from the furnace-blast with the branches we had used to beat out the fire round the big tree which was our main shelter.

The heat was awful! Live brands were flying past all the time, and some struck us, myriads of sparks fell round and on us, burning numberless small holes in our clothing, and dotting blisters on our backs; great sheets of flame leaped out



## REAL ADVENTURE

from the driving glare, and, detached by many yards from their source, were visible for quite a space in front of us. Then, just at its maddest and fiercest there came a gasp and sob, and the fire devil died behind us as it reached the black bare ground. Our burn divided it as an island splits the flood, and it swept along our flanks in two great walls of living, leaping, roaring flame.

Two hundred yards away there was a bare yellow place in a world of inky black, and to that haven we ran. It was strange to look about and see the naked country all round us, where but a few minutes earlier the tall grass had shut us in; but the big bare ant-heap was untouched, and there we flung ourselves down, utterly done.

Faint from heat and exhaustion—scorched<sup>c</sup> and blistered, face and arms, back and feet; weary and footsore, and with boots burnt through—we reached camp long after dark, glad to be alive.

We had forgotten the wounded buffalo; he seemed part of another life!

SIR PERCY FITZPATRICK—*Jock of the Bushveld*

## THE LAST MARCH

*Monday, February 19*—R 33. Temp.  $-17^{\circ}$ . We have struggled out 46 miles in a short day over a really terrible surface—it has been like pulling over desert sand, without the least glide in the world. If this goes on we shall have a bad time, but I sincerely trust it is only the result of the windless area close to the coast and that, as we are making steadily outwards, we shall shortly escape it. It is perhaps premature to be anxious about covering distance. In all other respects things are improving. We have our sleeping-bags spread on the sledge and they are drying, but, above all, we have our full measure of food again. To-night we had a sort of stew fry of pemmican and horseflesh, and voted it the best hoosh we had ever had on a sledge journey. The absence of poor Evans is a help to the commissariat, but if he had been here in a fit state we might have got along faster. I wonder what is in store for us, with some little alarm at the lateness of the season.

*[Here follows a depressing record of a monotonous fortnight's progress]*

*Friday, March 2*—Lunch. Misfortunes rarely

## REAL ADVENTURE

come singly. We marched to the [Middle Barrier] depôt fairly easily yesterday afternoon, and since that have suffered three distinct blows which have placed us in a bad position. First we found a shortage of oil; with most rigid economy it can scarce carry us to the next depôt on this surface [71 miles away]. Second, Titus Oates disclosed his feet, the toes showing very bad indeed, evidently bitten by the late temperatures. The third blow came in the night, when the wind, which we had hailed with some joy, brought dark overcast weather. It fell below  $-40^{\circ}$  in the night, and this morning it took  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hours to get our foot-gear on, but we got away before eight. We lost cairn and tracks together and made as steady as we could N. by W., but have seen nothing Worse was to come—the surface is simply awful. In spite of strong wind and full sail we have only done  $5\frac{1}{2}$  miles. We are in a *very* queer street, since there is no doubt we cannot do the extra marches and feel the cold horribly

*Sunday, March 4*—Lunch. Things looking *very* black indeed. As usual we forgot our trouble last night, got into our bags, slept splendidly on good hoosh, woke and had another, and started marching Sun shining brightly, tracks clear, but surface covered with sandy frost-rime. All the morning we had to pull with all our strength, and in  $4\frac{1}{2}$  hours we covered  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles Last night it

## THE LAST MARCH

was overcast and thick, surface bad, this morning sun shining and surface as bad as ever. Under the immediate surface crystals is a hard sastrugi surface, which must have been excellent for pulling a week or two ago. We are about 42 miles from the next depôt and have a week's food, but only about 3 to 4 days' fuel—we are as economical of the latter as one can possibly be, and we cannot afford to save food and pull as we are pulling. We are in a very tight place indeed, but none of us despondent yet, or at least we preserve every semblance of good cheer, but one's heart sinks as the sledge stops dead at some sastrugi behind which the surface sand lies thickly heaped. For the moment the temperature is in the  $-20^{\circ}$ —an improvement which makes us much more comfortable, but a colder snap is bound to come again soon. I fear that Oates at least will weather such an event very poorly. Providence to our aid! We can expect little from man now except the possibility of extra food at the next depôt. It will be real bad if we get there and find the same shortage of oil. Shall we get there? Such a short distance it would have appeared to us on the summit! I don't know what I should do if Wilson and Bowers weren't so determinedly cheerful over things.

*Monday, March 5.*—Lunch. Regret to say going from bad to worse. We got a slant of wind

## REAL ADVENTURE

yesterday afternoon, and going on 5 hours we converted our wretched morning run of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles into something over 9. We went to bed on a cup of cocoa and pemmican solid with the chill off. (R. 47.) The result is telling on all, but mainly on Oates, whose feet are in a wretched condition. One swelled up tremendously last night and he is



very lame this morning. We started march on tea and pemmican as last night—we pretend to prefer the pemmican this way. Marched for 5 hours this morning over a slightly better surface covered with high moundy sastrugi. Sledge cap-sized twice; we pulled on foot, covering about  $5\frac{1}{2}$  miles. We are two pony marches and 4 miles about from our depôt. Our fuel dreadfully low

## THE LAST MARCH

and the poor Soldier nearly done. It is pathetic enough because we can do nothing for him, more hot food might do a little, but only a little, I fear. We none of us expected these terribly low temperatures, and of the rest of us Wilson is feeling them most; mainly, I fear, from his self-sacrificing devotion in doctoring Oates' feet. We cannot help each other, each has enough to do to take care of himself. We get cold on the march when the trudging is heavy, and the wind pierces our worn garments. The others, all of them, are unendingly cheerful when in the tent. We mean to see the game through with a proper spirit, but it's tough work to be pulling harder than we ever pulled in our lives for long hours, and to feel that the progress is so slow. One can only say "God help us!" and plod on our weary way, cold and very miserable, though outwardly cheerful. We talk of all sorts of subjects in the tent, not much of food now, since we decided to take the risk of running a full ration. We simply couldn't go hungry at this time.

*Wednesday, March 7*—A little worse, I fear. One of Oates' feet *very* bad this morning; he is wonderfully brave. We still talk of what we will do together at home.

We only made  $6\frac{1}{2}$  miles yesterday. This morning in  $4\frac{1}{2}$  hours we did just over 4 miles. We are 16 from our depôt. If we only find the correct

proportion of food there and this surface continues, we may get to the next depôt [Mt. Hooper, 72 miles farther] but not to One Ton Camp. We hope against hope that the dogs have been to Mt Hooper; then we might pull through. If there is a shortage of oil again we can have little hope. One feels that for poor Oates the crisis is near, but none of us are improving, though we are wonderfully fit considering the really excessive work we are doing. We are only kept going by good food. No wind this morning till a chill northerly air came ahead. Sun bright and cairns showing up well. I should like to keep the track to the end.

*Thursday, March 8.*—Lunch. Worse and worse in morning; poor Oates' left foot can never last out, and time over foot-gear something awful. Have to wait in night foot-gear for nearly an hour before I started changing, and then am generally first to be ready. Wilson's feet giving trouble now. We did  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles this morning and are now  $8\frac{1}{2}$  miles from the depôt—a ridiculously small distance to feel in difficulties, yet on this surface we know we cannot equal half our old marches, and that for that effort we expend nearly double the energy. The great question is, What shall we find at the depôt? If the dogs have visited it we may get along a good distance, but if there is another short allowance of fuel, God

## THE LAST MARCH

help us indeed. We are in a very bad way, I fear, in any case.

*Saturday, March 10.*—Things steadily downhill. Oates' foot worse. He has rare pluck and must know that he can never get through. He asked Wilson if he had a chance this morning, and of course Bill had to say he didn't know. In point of fact he has none. Apart from him, if he went under now, I doubt whether we could get through. With great care we might have a dog's chance, but no more. The weather conditions are awful, and our gear gets steadily more icy and difficult to manage. At the same time, of course, poor Titus is the greatest handicap. He keeps us waiting in the morning until we have partly lost the warming effect of our good breakfast, when the only wise policy is to be up and away at once; again at lunch. Poor chap! it is too pathetic to watch him; one cannot but try to cheer him up.

Yesterday we marched up the dépôt, Mt Hooper. Cold comfort. Shortage on our allowance all round.

This morning it was calm when we breakfasted, but the wind came from the W.N.W. as we broke camp. It rapidly grew in strength. After travelling for half an hour I saw that none of us could go on facing such conditions. We were forced to camp and are spending the rest of the day in a



comfortless blizzard camp, wind quite foul.  
[R. 52.]

*Sunday, March 11.*—Titus Oates is very near the end, one feels. What we or he will do, God only knows. We discussed the matter after breakfast; he is a brave fine fellow and understands the situation, but he practically asked for advice. Nothing could be said but to urge him to march as long as he could. One satisfactory result to the discussion; I practically ordered Wilson to hand over the means of ending our troubles to us, so that any one of us may know how to do so. Wilson had no choice between doing so and our ransacking the medicine case. We have 30 opium tabloids apiece and he is left with a tube of morphine. So far the tragical side of our story.

The sky was completely overcast when we started this morning. We could see nothing, lost the tracks, and doubtless have been swaying a good deal since—3.1 miles for the forenoon—terribly heavy dragging—expected it. Know that 6 miles is about the limit of our endurance now, if we get no help from wind or surfaces. We have 7 days' food and should be about 55 miles from One Ton Camp to-night,  $6 \times 7 = 42$ , leaving us 13 miles short of our distance, even if things get no worse. Meanwhile the season rapidly advances.

## THE LAST MARCH

*Monday, March 12*—We did 69 miles yesterday, under our necessary average. Things are left much the same, Oates not pulling much, and now with hands as well as feet pretty well useless. We did 4 miles this morning in 4 hours 20 min.—we may hope for 3 this afternoon,  $7 \times 6 = 42$ . We shall be 47 miles from the depôt. I doubt if we can possibly do it. The surface remains awful, the cold intense, and our physical condition running down. God help us! Not a breath of favourable wind for more than a week, and apparently [we are] liable to head winds at any moment.

*Wednesday, March 14*.—No doubt about the going downhill, but everything going wrong for us. Yesterday we woke to a strong northerly wind with temp.  $-37^{\circ}$ . Couldn't face it, so remained in camp till 2, then did  $5\frac{1}{4}$  miles. Wanted to march later, but party feeling the cold badly as the breeze (N.) never took off entirely, and as the sun sank the temp. fell. Long time getting supper in dark.

This morning started with southerly breeze, set sail and passed another cairn at good speed, half-way, however, the wind shifted to W. by S. or W S W, blew through our wind clothes and into our mits. Poor Wilson horribly cold, could [not] get off ski for some time. Bowers and I practically made camp, and when we got into the tent

## REAL ADVENTURE

at last we were all deadly cold. Then temp. now midday down  $-43^{\circ}$  and the wind strong. We *must* go on, but now the making of every camp must be more difficult and dangerous. It must be near the end, but a pretty merciful end. Poor Oates got it again in the foot. I shudder to think what it will be like to-morrow. It is only with greatest pains rest of us keep off frostbites. No idea there could be temperatures like this at this time of year with such winds. Truly awful outside the tent. Must fight it out to the last biscuit, but can't reduce rations.

*Friday, March 16, or Saturday 17.*—Lost track of dates, but think the last correct. Tragedy all along the line. At lunch, the day before yesterday, poor Titus Oates said he couldn't go on; he proposed we should leave him in his sleeping-bag. That we could not do, and we induced him to come on, on the afternoon march. In spite of its awful nature for him he struggled on and we made a few miles. At night he was worse and we knew the end had come.

Should this be found I want these facts recorded. Oates' last thoughts were of his Mother, but immediately before he took pride in thinking that his regiment would be pleased with the bold way in which he met his death. We can testify to his bravery. He has borne intense suffering for weeks without complaint, and to the very last was able

## THE LAST MARCH

and willing to discuss outside subjects. He did not—would not—give up hope till the very end. He was a brave soul. This was the end. He slept through the night before last, hoping not to wake; but he woke in the morning—yesterday. It was blowing a blizzard. He said, "I am just going outside and may be some time." He went out into the blizzard and we have not seen him since.

I take this opportunity of saying that we have stuck to our sick companions to the last. In case of Edgar Evans, when absolutely out of food and he lay insensible, the safety of the remainder seemed to demand his abandonment, but Providence mercifully removed him at this critical moment. He died a natural death, and we did not leave him till two hours after his death. We knew that poor Oates was walking to his death, but though we tried to dissuade him, we knew it was the act of a brave man and an English gentleman. We all hope to meet the end with a similar spirit, and assuredly the end is not far.

I can only write at lunch and then only occasionally. The cold is intense,  $-40^{\circ}$  at midday. My companions are unendingly cheerful, but we are all on the verge of serious frostbites, and though we constantly talk of fetching through, I don't think any one of us believes it in his heart.

We are cold on the march now, and at all times except meals. Yesterday we had to lie up for a blizzard and to-day we move dreadfully slowly. We are at No. 14 pony camp, only two pony marches from One Ton Dépôt. We leave here our theodolite, a camera, and Oates' sleeping-bags, Diariës, etc., and geological specimens carried at Wilson's special request, will be found with us or on our sledge.

*Sunday, March 18.*—To-day, lunch, we are 21 miles from the dépôt. Ill-fortune presses, but better may come. We have had more wind and drift from ahead yesterday; had to stop marching; wind N.W., force 4, temp.  $-35^{\circ}$ . No human being could face it, and we are worn out *nearly*.

My right foot has gone, nearly all the toes—two days ago I was proud possessor of best feet. These are the steps of my downfall. Like an ass I mixed a small spoonful of curry powder with my melted pemmican—it gave me violent indigestion. I lay awake and in pain all night; woke and felt done on the march; foot went and I didn't know it. A very small measure of neglect and I have a foot which is not pleasant to contemplate. Bowers takes first place in condition, but there is not much to choose after all. The others are still confident of getting through—or pretend to be—I don't know! We have the last

## THE LAST MARCH

*half* fill of oil in our primus and a very small quantity of spirit—this alone between us and thirst. The wind is fair for the moment, and that is perhaps a fact to help. The mileage would have seemed ridiculously small on our outward journey.

*Monday, March 19*—Lunch. We camped with difficulty last night and were dreadfully cold till after our supper of cold pemmican and biscuit and a half a pannikin of cocoa cooked over the spirit. Then, contrary to expectation, we got warm and all slept well. To-day we started in the usual dragging manner. Sledge dreadfully heavy. We are  $15\frac{1}{2}$  miles from the depôt and ought to get there in three days. What progress! We have two days' food, but barely a day's fuel. All our feet are getting bad—Wilson's best, my right foot worse, left all right. There is no chance to nurse one's feet till we can get hot food into us. Amputation is the least I can hope for now, but will the trouble spread? That is the serious question. The weather doesn't give us a chance—the wind from N to N.W. and  $-40^{\circ}$  temp. to-day.

*Wednesday, March 21.*—Got within 11 miles of depôt Monday night;<sup>1</sup> had to lie up all yesterday in severe blizzard. To-day forlorn hope, Wilson and Bowers going to depôt for fuel.

<sup>1</sup> The 60th camp from the Pole.

## REAL ADVENTURE

22 and 23 —Blizzard bad as ever—Wilson and Bowers unable to start—to-morrow last chance—no fuel and only one or two<sup>1</sup> of food left—must be near the end Have decided it shall be natural—we shall march for the depôt with or without our effects and die in our tracks.

[*Thursday*] *March 29* —Since the 21st we have had a continuous gale from W.S W. and S.W. We had fuel to make two cups of tea apiece and bare food for two days on the 20th. Every day we have been ready to start for our depôt 11 miles away, but outside the door of the tent it remains a scene of whirling drift. I do not think we can hope for any better things now. We shall stick it out to the end, but we are getting weaker, of course, and the end cannot be far.

It seems a pity, but I do not think I can write more

R SCOTT

Last entry

For God's sake look after our people

<sup>1</sup> Word missing: evidently "rations"

CAPTAIN R F SCOTT—*Scott's Last Expedition*



### A SPINSTER AMONG CANNIBALS

You find the most unadulterated Africans naturally in the sort of cōuntry where other races have not interfered with them, that is to say, in regions where the white races have not been able to flourish, on account of the unhealthiness, and where Mohammedans have not penetrated owing to an aversion to dense forests. This region is pre-eminently the great one of the African Forest belt, which, as you know, goes almost across that Continent in its equatorial regions, and which you get at its densest in the Western region of Africa—between the Niger and the Congo. The whole of this splendid schoolroom is covered with a dense high grand forest, so luxuriant in growth that the few missionaries, traders, and agriculturally-



mind ed natives who live in it have to fight back the forest as a Dutchman fights the sea. The main population there are *not* agricultural, but nomadic, predatory tribes like the great Fan and Akele. The highways through this country are naturally the rivers, and the greatest of these rivers between the Niger and the Congo is my well-beloved river Ogowé, which lies nearly on the Equator for 700 miles of its course and which throws into the Atlantic 1,750,000 cubic feet of water per second, and which has 500 miles of rapids; 400 miles of great water-way, continuous on its main course. Certainly they are the most glorious things I have seen in my life. But certainly next to them is the Ogowé region of the Oronogou country, which, as you may know, is the region on the north bank of the lower Ogowé. You can go into the Oronogou country as I did by coming down the Ogowé and turning in at any place you may see fit. The Ogowé for 130 miles of its lower course is walled by great cliff-like walls of forest—forests that rise up out of its dark brown waters in unbroken cliffs to the height of 150 and 200 feet, and when you are on your first trip to the Oronogou country this way, you do not give a thought to having to go into the face of that forest wall. You think your canoe-men are taking you to some place where there is a river entrance that they know of; but presently you come to a place

## A SPINSTER AMONG CANNIBALS

where the forest wall on the north bank sweeps away in a bay-like curve, the splendid white-grey columns of its giant cotton and redwood trees looking like the façade of some vast inchoate temple; then your canoe flies round, and charges into the papyrus reed bank with which the bay is filled, and you spend maybe an hour, maybe several, pulling it onward through those kings of all the water-reeds, and, having passed through them, you do not come to a bank, but find the water goes on into the forest, and on into that great glorious strange world of gloom and grandeur you go too. One hundred and fifty feet above you now there is a dense canopy, formed by the interlaced crowns of the trees, and their infinity of bush-ropes and parasitical plants, that shuts out all the sky; around you on all sides in the green gloom are countless thousands of grey bare tree-columns, as straight as ships' masts, and between them a twisted medley of great bare black-bush-ropes, looking as if they were some Homeric-battle of serpents that at its height had been fixed for ever by some magic spell, while beneath you and away into the shadowed vastness lay the stagnant currentless dark waters, making a floor for the forest, a floor whose face is like that of a mirror seen in gloom—dimly showing you the forms outside it, seeming to have in it, images of unknown things. Your canoe sweeps surely on

through the tree-columned aisle, until you reach a slight clay mound that is above water-level. On it there is the village your companions were making for. Every house in that village stands upon stilts—very rickety stilts that look as if the house had taken to them some night hurriedly, when an extra rise in the water round threatened to wash it away and gave it no time to get proper ones. There are not many villages in this sort of country, the few that there are are on clay mounds, and are inhabited by people who are down after the fishing at certain seasons of the year only, whose real villages are away on the slopes of the strange bubble-shaped forested mountains that here and there rise out of the level of the Ouronogou swamp. But in spite of the mosquitoes that abound; in spite of the way crocodiles come among the stilts of your houses at night and swish about with their tails in a way that makes you think that if those crocodiles are not more careful they will certainly have the house and you down on the top of them; in spite of there being no chickens in the village, also because of the crocodiles; in spite of there being no children brought there, for the same sufficient reason; in spite of the whole air being laden with the stink of putrefying fish offal, and several other little drawbacks like that, I know a village in that Ouronogou country that stands among the walling

## A SPINSTER AMONG CANNIBALS

trees of a broad lake, and I would gladly be there now, because in the morning time (while black night was still around me) I could look up and see Mount Santatong's summit far away, taking on to itself in flushes of daffodil, amethyst and rose, the light of the dawn, and I should hear the plantain birds whistling their long mellow calls to the dawn, for it comes among us and makes everything glorious with colour, warmth and beauty, while the night, accompanied by its crocodiles, slides away down into the dark waters. It is like a vision of Heaven. It does not last long, the white mists soon curl up out of the swamp waters round you, and wrap you up in their chill embrace for hours, and then they fade away and leave you with the grey sky overhead again, a heavy grey sky that seems to rest on the tree-tops during the dry season, and of course if you are not on a lake you cannot see your vision at all, because you are too shut in, and you only know when the dawn is come by the chill of it and the mist creeping up in the swamp forest round you—coiling and twisting among the tree-columns like vast serpents, playing with wind as only West African mists can.

While in this country I inadvertently had several collisions with crocodiles. Once an hippopotamus and I were on an island alone together, and I wanted one of us to leave. I preferred it should be myself, but the hippo was close to my

canoe, and looked like staying, so I made cautious and timorous advances to him and finally scratched him behind the ear with my umbrella and we parted on good terms. But with the crocodile it was different. At one of these Ouronogou villages there was a man named Nohumba who had had three separate wives bitten by one crocodile at different times, when they had been fetching water from the bank-side. I was in touch at the time of catastrophe No. 3, and as I was coming down the hen-roosty ladder from her house after bandaging her up, I saw her husband Nohumba, and I asked him *why* he did not catch the crocodile. He said respectfully that there were reasons—his gun. "Don't so much as mention that gun," I said, "after yesterday's performance"—yesterday's performance having been the accidental discharging of that hoary weapon through the bottom of a canoe, whereby I and some more friends of Nohumba's, and that worthy himself, had come near being drowned. "Catch the crocodile with a hook!" He grinned, and said you could not. "You're wrong, my friend," I said, "it's been done," and Nohumba became interested. He was getting used to me, and he gleefully suggested I should catch that crocodile with a hook. "Very well," said I, "you and half a dozen other men come with me to the pool before sundown." And I spent the rest of the day cut-

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ting wood-hooks, and securing the interior arrangements of a goat that had been killed, and requisitioning the village for its best bush-rope, and a billet of bar-wood to serve as a float, fixing the hooks and the bait on carefully, *à la Waterton*; and sundown found us with our paraphernalia at the pool, making no end of a fuss. Three of us, I being one, got into a canoe with the hook and tackle, leaving the shore end of the bush-rope in charge of the rest of the party on the bank, and having fixed on our bar-wood float, we commenced a wordy discussion as to the best place to sink the bait, so that the crocodile *could not* miss coming across it. We finally hit off the correct spot to a nicety. Before the hooks had touched the thick brown water, the crocodile's jaws rose then and there out of it, and closed over the bait with a snap. We, being severely frightened, automatically hung on to the line; the crocodile gave that swing of the head they always do when seizing things. Over went the canoe, and there we were, crocodile and all, in the water together. Needless to say, before proceeding further with this undertaking, we made for the bank. On reaching the bank, I said to my companions, "There, you have made a pretty mess of it. Why in the name of common sense didn't you fellows at the shore end of the rope hold on when you saw us upsetting?" We let the crowd

## REAL ADVENTURE

on the bank know, within a little, what we thought of people who just howled and danced when they saw devoted members of society, trying to catch a man-eating crocodile, upset and pretty well killed *through their foolishness*. This being done, I smoothed things over by congratulating everyone on the fact that the principle and practicality of catching crocodiles with hooks were demonstrated; all that was now required was a *little* more caution in the application of the method, and something to kill the crocodile with when it had been caught—things we had forgotten before, although we knew what he had swallowed would not even give him indigestion. The next day I was sent for early to a village to see a man who was ill, and I was away with him all day, not returning to my village until about 11 p.m. When paddling myself alone in a tiny one-man canoe up the creek towards home, I heard a sound of revelry by night which astonished me, for my village usually retired to bed about nine o'clock. On arrival I found high festival, they all alone and by themselves had caught that crocodile with a hook, and were having some for supper. I was besieged by accounts of the triumph. One gentleman who had a nasty wound from a blow from the crocodile's tail was *the* hero of the evening, and receiving much attention from the ladies, who had done him up with suitable leaves.

## A SPINSTER AMONG CANNIBALS

Nohumba, however, claimed *the* credit of the performance, loudly, in consequence of having shot the crocodile with his gun, the only one in the village. Like *all* great men in Africa, he had his detractors. Particularly critical of his performance was a gentleman who said, "If Nohumba had emptied his weapon *entirely* into the crocodile instead of partially into it and partially in another gentleman's legs, it would have been better," and considering the trouble it gave me, tired as I was, to extract part of Nohumba's charge from those legs, I quite agreed with him, but on the whole it was a triumph and we rejoiced exceedingly.

I will give you my first experience of trading methods. I ignorantly embarked on this in the middle of the terrible cannibal Ba-Fan tribe, and in a region made in a wild way, and adjoining the Sierra del Crystal range, where it meets the Ogowé upper basin in the Okono affluent. I had made friends with three choice spirits, ivory-traders of the Ajumba tribe, and I persuaded them to let me go with them on one of their trips after ivory. They were to take me and my little belongings in their canoe to a village, and were to give me a most excellent character to the local nobility and gentry. I told them what to say, and paid them for saying it, to prevent mistakes, and then they were to leave me there and go higher up the river on their own business, and call for me on



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their way down. They duly took me, gave the village the idea that I was *just* the sort of thing to improve the local social tone, and left me. I was horribly nervous when they did, for on our way up to it we had come across a gentleman who danced and howled on the bank, and wanted to sell something badly as we were a trading company. We went for him like an arrow, thinking it might be a tooth—an elephant's I mean, not his own. It wasn't—it was a leg—not his own either, but the leg of a gentleman of some kind. This upset my companions and made them sick, and it and their conversation on those Fans which followed, made me nervous.

The first night, however, that I was there, something happened. It was just before what we call out there *the second making-up of the fire*, say . 3.30 a.m. The moon had been shining, but had set, and so it was inky dark, when there came a tremendous bellow and a crash. The whole line of huts, in one of which I was, was shaken and wrenched almost off the ground, which quivered in rapid pulsations; then came another crash, quicker than one can say, and another bellow, and a something went tearing away into the dense high dark forest that surrounded the village. I need hardly say the Fans were by this time in the street with lights, to see what had happened. What had happened was plain enough. That something had

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torn its way right through the village at the further end, smashing down the frail huts and scattering the people in them, and their possessions. What had done it of course the Fans knew, but I did not for a time, because they were too busy yelling and using bad language against the thing to tell me. The families whose homes had been broken up were taken in by their neighbours for the night, and the row was just commencing to subside, and I making my mind up to go indoors again, when again came the bellow and the crash and the earth quiver, and right through the south end of the village an immense hippopotamus tore full tilt, and went splash into the river. The animal was about twelve feet long, and bulky as a small elephant, and weighed a ton or two. Of course this quite took up the rest of the night, and was not done by breakfast-time. Meantime I learnt that it is the habit of these great river beasts to come out of the river at night and go and feed on the natives' farms, if there were any handy; and as each hippopotamus's stomach holds between five and six bushels, they cause an acute form of agricultural depression. They are also very nervous creatures and prone to get flurried when on land, and now and again, when the moon has gone down on them while away destroying crops, one of them gets separated from the others; it loses its head and its way, and dashes to and

fro until the daylight comes. If you can picture to yourself a furniture-van in hysterics, you will realize the sort of thing that went through that unfortunate village in the middle of the night

The next morning the Fans turned their attention to me, and started selling to me their store of elephant tusks and indiarubber. I did not want those things then, but still felt too nervous of the Fans to point this out firmly, and so had to buy. I made it as long an affair as I could, and was very frightened all the time I was doing it, because I had given my word to the white and black traders not to spoil prices, namely, not to raise prices by giving more than the customary value, and I gradually found myself the proud owner of balls of rubber and a tooth or so, and alas! my little stock of cloth and tobacco all going fast. Now, to be short of money anywhere is bad, but to be short of money in a Fan village is extremely bad, because these Fans, when a trader has no more goods to sell them, are liable to start trade all over again by killing him, and taking back their ivory and rubber and keeping it until another trader comes along. So I kept my eye up-river most anxiously on the look-out for my black-trader friends' canoe, and for days in vain. All my trade-stuff was by now exhausted, and I had to start selling my own belongings, and for the first time in my life I felt the want of a big outfit

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My own clothes I certainly did insist on having more for, pointing out that they were rare and curious. A dozen white ladies' blouses sold well. I cannot say they looked well when worn by a brawny warrior in conjunction with *nothing* else but red paint and a bunch of leopard tails, particularly when the warrior failed to tie the strings at the back. But I did not hunt at this, and I *quite* realize that a pair of stockings can be made to go further than we make them by using one at a time and putting the top part over the head and letting the rest of the garment float on the breeze. But I had too few, and they were all gone before that canoe came, indeed, everything but what I stood up in was. The last thing I parted with was my tooth-brush, and the afternoon that had gone, down came the canoe, just as I was making up my mind to set up in business as a witch-doctor. The black traders said they were very glad to see me again, but I should have a very hard time if I came down with them, because *they* also had sold right out, and therefore dare not call at any village before reaching the main river. I said, "Oh, don't mention that, *pray* I'll come with you," and to the grief of those Fans, I left them.

We did have a pretty hard time. We could only travel at night, for fear of being seen, so every morning, as the dawn showed, we took the canoe into a bank of great water-reeds—things some

twelve to fourteen feet high—and lay there all day, hidden, but not happy, because these reed-beds swarm with flies, and our respective heaps of indiarubber used to get soft and sticky in the heat, and when any one of us dropped off to sleep against one, we stuck to it, and had to be peeled off. The ivory we had with us stank as only fresh ivory can, and of course attracted more flies from Africa at large. However, there it was, and there we were, and so we dozed and ate and played a game called "warry" with little beans, on board all day. As soon as night came down—fortunately for us there was no moon—we softly stole out on to the river, and two of us kept the canoe on her course by just steering, one from each end, with a paddle, where the current was strong, or cautiously paddling under water, so as to make no noise, where the current was slack. This went on all night, broken only by catastrophes such as running full tilt into floating trees or great pinnacles of rock—things that seemed to be the kernels of all the extra dark places, and the worst of it was, we were obliged to keep our feelings on the subject of these catastrophes to ourselves, for fear of being heard by any local natives.

But I would go back to that canoe again to-night, for the beauty of the scene was beyond description. The river here was narrow, though very deep, and ran between great heavily-forested

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mountain walls of the range of the Sierra del Crystal, and their noble summits stood out clear and black against the star-lit purple sky. The air around us was begemmed with fire-flies, and so heavy with the scent of flowers that we smelt them above the stench even of our own ivory, and every now and again we dropped down past a native village, seeing the natives dancing by the light of the fires, and hearing the thump, thump, thump, of their drums, and the long-drawn melancholy cadence of their song.

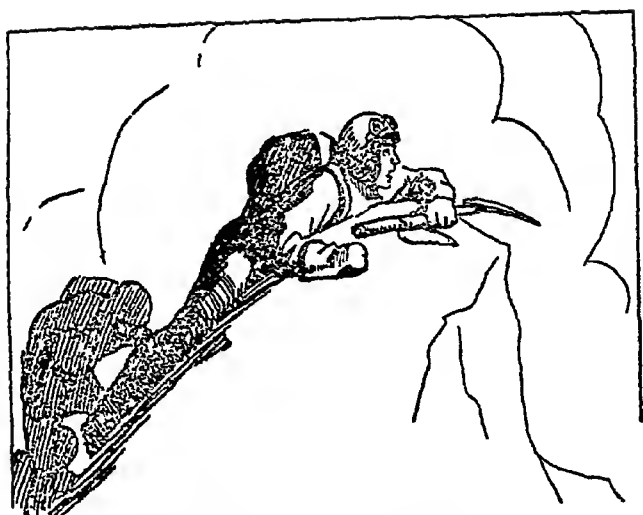
It is in regions such as these that the charm of West Africa seizes on you, a charm, that once you fall under its sway, you never escape from. I know I have wearied you here and elsewhere by my diffuseness regarding things West African, but there is one thing I know I have not sufficiently brought home to you, and that is the charm of West Africa. It is a thing difficult to explain to some people, but I am sure there are among you here people who know by experience the charm some countries exercise over men—countries very different from each other and from West Africa. The charm of West Africa is a painful one. It gives you pleasure to fall under it when you are out there, but when you are back here, it gives you pain, by calling you. It sends up before your eyes a vision of a wall of dancing, white, rainbow-gemmed surf playing on a shore of yellow sand

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before an audience of stately cocoa-palms, or of a great mangrove-walled bronze river, or of a vast forest cathedral, and you hear, *nearer* to you than the voices of the people round you, *nearer* than the road of the city traffic, the sound of that surf that is beating on the shore down there, and the sound of the wind talking in the hard palm-leaves, and the thump of the natives' tom-toms, or the cry of the parrots passing over the mangrove swamps in the evening time—and everything that is round you grows poor and thin in the face of that vision, and you want to go back to the coast that is calling you, saying, as the African says to the departing soul of his dying friend, "Come back, this is your home."

MARY KINGSLEY *from*

STEPHEN GWYNN—*The Life of Mary Kingsley.*



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THE night passed, the lightning became feeble and finally died away, petulant gusts of wind set the frost-stiffened canvas rustling and crackling.

A cold dawn filtered into a cold world. With a conscious effort I heaved myself to my knees. The sleeping-bag cracked sharply, it was sheeted with ice deposited by my congealed breath. With numbed fingers I fumbled at the frozen tapes securing the flaps of the tent and, parting them at last, peered outside. A cloudless sky was shot with green and orange; the peaks stood from the night like pallid statues. I glanced upwards. Dawn was gilding the crest of Kamet. Now was the time to start, but it was too cold—the coldest morning I ever remember in the Himalaya. The



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world almost creaked in the cold. To have left the comparative shelter of our tents would have meant certain frostbite. It was essential that we should start comfortably, with a hot breakfast inside us, and cooking and eating under such conditions were impossible. I slipped my hands back into my sleeping-bag and busied myself restoring the circulation to my numbed finger-tips. How easily circulation is lost at high altitudes, and how slowly and painfully it returns!

The sun was not long in coming, and we emerged thankfully from our tents into its life-giving rays.

Breakfast was a hurried affair. We craved sugar more than any other substance, but tinned fruit and sardines also went down well, and so did steaming cups of tea.

We spoke but little, our minds were busied by thoughts of what the day might bring forth. At 8 a.m. we started off, on our final push for the summit.

We climbed on two ropes, Shipton and Lewa on one, Holdsworth, Nima Dorje and I on the other. We carried rucksacks with food and spare clothes, and Nima Dorje bore a heavy load consisting of some 20 lbs. of cinematograph apparatus.

Between Camp Five and the foot of the northern face of Kamet stretched an almost level expanse of snow. We had hoped against hope that

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the westerly winds which lash the upper regions of the mountain had hardened the surface of the snow into a crust sufficiently solid to enable us to walk comfortably without having to do anything more than kick steps. Our hopes were not fulfilled, we had not marched more than a few yards from the camp before we were sinking in boot deep.

The foot of the slope up which we must go was littered with ice-blocks, fallen from a line of séracs 1,000 ft. higher. Fortunately, by keeping well to the left, we were able to avoid the danger zone, and were thus spared the ordeal of having to run the gauntlet of ice avalanches.

But the snow, if disagreeably soft, was at least consistent in its softness; it was possible to maintain a rhythm. I have already written of the importance of maintaining a rhythm in high-altitude mountaineering. It is better to have moderately soft snow consistent in its softness than a mixture of very soft and very hard snow on which rhythmical movement is impossible. Of course, when very soft snow is encountered, rhythm is equally impossible, owing to the difficulty and effort of lifting the foot, and had the snow between Camp Five and the summit of Kamet been very soft the whole way, there would have been no hope of reaching the summit in one day, and we should have been forced to pitch a higher camp

Shipton, Holdsworth and I took it in turns to lead. We did about a quarter of an hour each. Had there been only two of us to stamp out the steps the work would have been very exhausting, but the difference between taking a turn every half an hour and taking it every quarter of an hour at such an altitude is enormous.

In its lower portion the slope was between  $30^{\circ}$  and  $40^{\circ}$  in angle—it steepened gradually.

We sat down for a rest. As we sat, our thudding hearts and hard-pressed lungs gradually eased to a more normal rhythm. We had climbed the first 500 ft. in an hour and had reason to congratulate ourselves. Immediately below us were Meade's Col and the camp—toylike tents and snow crumpled with footmarks. Only the Eastern Ibi Gamin overlooked us. To the right was the snowy edge of the eastern precipice. Fleecy clouds were beginning to twist up from the valleys. The plains of Tibet were opening out; their brown and yellow expanses melted into violet distances. Eastwards, Gurla Mandhata rose serenely.

We munched a little chocolate and sipped tea from a Thermos flask. It was gloriously hot in the sun, and as yet no wind had arisen to chill us. Lolling in the snow, I felt languid and sleepy. Further advance seemed unnecessary and even absurd. Why not continue to sit and drowse

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the day away in the warm sun? I forced myself to take some photographs and change a cinematograph film. It was simple and easy work, yet it involved expenditure of both physical and mental energy.

The few minutes we allowed ourselves soon passed. Shipton and Lewa rose to their feet and started up the slope. It was interesting to watch them. Shipton, a born mountaineer, has acquired to perfection the art of climbing a snow-slope with the minimum of effort. Lewa, on the other hand, is so constituted that he tends to expend more of his magnificent energy than is necessary. So much fire and dash is his to command that he cannot properly control its tumultuous outflow, and his eager, jerky movements contrasted oddly with the almost leisurely rhythm of Shipton. As they toiled through the soft snow, I trained the cine-camera on them and "shot" some film. I remember wishing as I did so that I had not burdened myself with the work of taking a film of the expedition, and I vowed that I would never do it again.

Holdsworth, Nima Dorje and I followed. One moment we had been sitting at ease, fully capable of appreciating the glorious panorama spread out before us, the next moment, almost with a suddenness of a blow, ease had been relegated to the past, and we became once more panting automa-

tons of flesh and blood. Sitting, we had forgotten that we were breathing the thin air of nearly 25,000 ft., but even the effort of rising to our feet served like the touch of a foot on the sensitive throttle of a powerful racing car, to set the machinery of heart and lungs pounding furiously.

The snow worsened. Previously, it had been merely soft, but now we encountered crusted snow of the most malignant type, crust which broke when the whole weight had been transferred to the forward foot, letting us sink helplessly into the soft powdery snow beneath.

Even had we taken snow-raquettes with us they would have been useless—the slope was too steep. Ski also would have been impracticable, for, although the crust was not sufficiently frozen to withstand the weight of a booted man, ski would not have broken it and could not have been edged into it. Rhythmical movement was impossible, and we resigned ourselves to something worse than ordinary toil. Our speed of ascent dropped from 500 ft. to about 300 ft. an hour. From 100 ft. at a stretch by the leader, we were reduced to 50 ft. Jealously we glanced back at the square-topped summit of the Eastern Ibi Gamin, but it was long ere we overtopped it.

Here and there the slope had been riven by crevasses. These were now choked with snow over which we could pass safely, but in some cases

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the upper edges of the crevasses rose in steep lips, necessitating a few steps being cut. Step-cutting over 24,000 ft is dreadfully fatiguing work, and every minute or two the leader had to stop and gasp and gasp for oxygen.

Perhaps 1,000 ft below the summit we encountered plate-like masses of hard snow, resembling shallow mushrooms several yards in diameter, that had been plastered to the slope by the wind. These plates cracked and slithered away when the foot was placed on them, and we sank knee deep into the powdery snow beneath.

During the ascent of the first 500 ft. we had been content to halt only while the lead was being changed, but now, owing to the exhausting nature of the work, the leader found it necessary to sink down into the snow for a rest every few yards, whilst even those behind were glad to follow his example. During these frequent halts we could discern nearly 3,000 ft. beneath us the second party mounting slowly towards Camp Five. If to us they appeared mere dots moving with the slowness of a clock's hour hand, how must we have appeared to them? It was good to see them, for we knew that they must be watching us, and were with us in spirit urging us on to success.

We arrived at a point where the slope steepened abruptly. Ice-walls and soft snow forced us diagonally to the left towards the edge of the

eastern precipice. Now, for the first time since leaving the camp, we could see the final slope separating us from the summit ridge. It was at this slope, 400 ft. high, that we had gazed so doubtfully the evening before. Previous opinion as to its steepness needed no confirmation. From the camp it had looked steep, and we knew now that it *was* steep. Everything depended on its condition. Supposing that the rippled, wind-blown snow covering it concealed hard ice? If step-cutting was necessary throughout its entire height it would be impossible to overcome it without pitching a higher camp. Time would defeat us; it would take many hours—a whole day's work at least. And supposing the slope consisted of snow ready to avalanche if disturbed? There was no avoiding it. Ice-walls barred approach to the right, sheer precipices fell away to the left. Then indeed we should be conclusively beaten. Supposing it proved necessary to pitch a higher camp, was there a ledge on that inhospitable slope of Kamet where a camp could be pitched? We could see none. And were the porters capable of carrying up equipment? It was doubtful; they were already tired from their exertions between Camps Four and Five.

The edge of the eastern precipice abutted as an ill-defined ridge against the final slope. At the point where the ridge merged into the slope a large

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boulder of Kamet's reddish granite projected from the ice. It looked a welcome resting-place where we might recoup our energies for the final tussle. Up to it we started to climb. Perhaps 100 ft below the boulder, our feet struck ice beneath the snow. The snow thinned until it was no longer deep enough to hold the foot securely to the ice. Step-cutting became necessary. The leader braced himself to the task. The axe swung back and leapt forward, meeting the ice with a dull thud.

In the Alps, the ringing thud of the axe and the swish and tinkle of dislodged fragments are music in my ears. The confident raising of the body from step to step, by limbs untired and in perfect training, brings happiness and contentment. But cutting steps in ice at 25,000 ft. is a very different matter. The ice-slope is not to be welcomed as providing a test of skill, it is an implacable enemy, mute yet savage, passive yet resistant. It hates

Thud, thud, thud. A step is made. The foot lifts slowly; the nailed boot grinds into the ice.

Thud, thud, thud. There is a duller, less confident ring in the sound of the axe striking the ice. The work stops. Heart and lungs are striving desperately for oxygen; the snow-slope swims uncertainly before the eyes of the exhausted mountaineer. He doubles up, and gasps, and gasps, and gasps.

Presently, his body ceases its clamouring for



oxygen. He braces his tired and quivering muscles, grasps his axe, and swings it forward again into the green face of the ice.

Thud, thud, thud.

And so it goes on.

One hundred feet—an hour's unremitting toil. We approached the red boulder and, glancing gratefully at it, promised ourselves a long rest on its sun-warmed surface. But as we cut steps up the ice by the side of it our premature gratitude changed to disgust. The boulder was smooth and sloping and there was no place on it where we could sit. But, in one respect at least, fate was kind, the snow above the boulder lay a foot deep on the ice. One by one, we sank down into it.

Nima Dorje was last on the rope. He was going badly. His feet were slipping from the ice steps and he was using the rope as a hand-hold, a sure sign of exhaustion. As he approached, I could see that his eyes were dull and had lost their animation. His thick lips were parted widely and his lower jaw hung down. It was no surprise to us when, on joining us, he sank into the snow gasping out that he was finished, and could go on no farther. He had bravely done his best and had carried a load of cinematograph apparatus weighing 20 lbs on his back to a height of over 25,000 ft. He soon recovered from his temporary exhaustion, and although it was impossible for

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him to continue, he was able to return alone safely, for the route was devoid of danger so long as he kept to the uphill track, and a slip on the ice-slope could be attended with no worse consequences than a slide into the soft snow beneath.

It was now 2 p.m. Six hours had passed since we had left Camp Five. The first 500 ft had been climbed in about an hour, but the last 1,300 ft had taken five hours, an average speed of well under 300 ft an hour. This slow rate of progress had been due to the terrible snow and the time spent hewing steps in the ice-slope below the boulder. Anxiously we stared at the slope above us. There was no deception as to its steepness. Its average angle was well over  $50^{\circ}$ —an angle at least as steep as that of the ice-slopes on the Brenva face of Mont Blanc. Everything depended on the condition of the snow. Had the slope been pure ice from top to bottom there would have been no alternative but to retreat and devote our energies during the next two or three days to the difficult task of establishing a higher camp, or possibly of attempting the alternative route from Meade's Col.

As far as the boulder, a slip could not have mattered, but the final slope overlooked the great eastern precipice of Kamet, and a slip on it was not to be thought of. Heaving ourselves wearily to our feet, we recommenced the ascent. Again.

we found ourselves on disagreeable mushroom-like plates of snow, but on the whole firmer snow than we had encountered lower down. Between these plates there was powder snow, and the foot sank into it encountering ice. Here step-cutting was necessary. To do it we had to summon up the whole of our mental determination as well as our physical energy, and both were now dulled by fatigue and altitude. The temptation was to kick steps and trust to the snow holding. Luck had been with us so far, and we could scarcely afford to abuse it now. In places steps were necessary for safety, and I am glad to be able to record that those steps were cut.

The slope steepened until it was practically a wall. We advanced in turn. A few feet at a time was enough, and we would then stop to gasp for oxygen and renewed energy.

I remember that on these occasions, as I leaned forward to rest on my in-driven ice-axe, I could see my feet, a few yards of wind-caked snow-slope, and then the East Kamet Glacier, nearly 7,000 ft beneath. By the boulder sat the solitary figure of Nima Dorje. The sun was still shining on him, but already we were in chill shadow.

In with the ice-axe and on. The plates of hard snow swished away into the abyss, a gentle sibilant whisper. When I was leading, there was naught but the blank slope before me. When

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my companions were leading, my vision was limited to their feet. I remember once experiencing a ridiculous feeling of annoyance at the sight of Holdsworth's boot, breaking away one of the evil snow-slabs. I thought savagely to myself, Why can't he kick a better step—why fiddle and fumble in that ridiculous manner? But, when my turn came to lead, my feet kicked just as clumsily. Directly above us the declining sun illuminated a small flake of snow projecting from the summit ridge with a calm gleam. The flake seemed always as far away. Then suddenly, to my surprise, I could touch it. Driving my ice-axe in before me, I hauled myself up on both arms, crushing the flake beneath me. I found myself sprawling, exhausted with the effort, face downwards, across the summit ridge. My head was in the sun, my feet in the shadow. Huge columns of cloud were rising djinn-like from the blue depths into which I gazed. They swayed unsubstantially for a moment as I fought for oxygen. For perhaps a minute I lay gasping like a stranded fish, then, pulling myself together, swung astride the sharp roof-like ridge and began taking in Holdsworth's rope round the ice-axe. Presently, we were all congregated on the ridge.

We had hoped to find ourselves on the summit, or within a few yards of it, but we saw immediately that we were separated from it by a knife-

like crest of snow As we gazed along the narrow path we must tread, we experienced a pang of apprehension. Some thirty yards distant the ridge rose up into a sharp point. Beyond this nothing was to be seen, but we realized instinctively that the point was not the summit. Slopes of rock and snow, which we could see sloping up beyond it, indicated something higher. Had Kamet a surprise in store for us? What if there was an impracticable cleft in the ridge between us and the summit? We would have given much for a rest, but to rest was impossible, until we had stood upon the point and seen what lay beyond.

We started to toil along the ridge. It was nearly horizontal and exceedingly sharp. On either hand the slopes fell away with great steepness; it seemed incredible that we could have ascended from those shadowy abysses to the right of us. I remember trampling and crushing the delicate snow edge with a careful yet savage deliberation. There must be no mistake now. On the slope below we had been mere automatons—toiling atoms incapable almost of reasoned and coherent thought—but now we were thinking men again, capable of realizing our amazing position on this snowy edge of the world. Tiredness was replaced by a fierce exhilaration. The numbed brain leapt into renewed activity. The summit was almost within our grasp; surely it

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could not escape us now? We gained the point and gazed over and beyond it. At our feet the ridge sank down to a shallow gap. Beyond the gap it merged gently into a small cone of snow—the summit!

We seized hold of Lewa and shoved him on in front of us. As I clutched hold of him I could hear the breath jerking from him in wheezy gasps. I do not think that he quite understood what we were doing. And so he was first to tread the summit. It was the least compliment we could pay to those splendid men, our porters, to whom we owed the success of our expedition.

As we reached the summit we saw that there was another equally high summit a few yards away, so, to be quite sure, we trudged across to it. Nothing further disputed us and for the last time we sank down into the snow.

With numbed and fumbling hands, I manipulated my camera and cine-camera, photographing and filming the party, the view from the summit, and the summit itself from the range of a few yards. By the time I had finished, my fingers were stiff, white and dead. Fearing frostbite, I beat my hands together. Circulation returned sluggishly and so painfully that I could barely refrain from groaning.

We left Camp Five at 8 a.m. and arrived on the summit at 4.30 p.m.; eight and a half hours

work for about 2,300 ft. of ascent. As the first 500 ft. had been climbed in a little over an hour, the ascent of the last 1,500 ft had taken no less than  $7\frac{1}{2}$  hours—an average climbing speed of little more than 200 ft an hour. Snow conditions, rather than altitude, had been responsible for this funereal rate of progress. As we lay in the snow, Holdsworth smoked half a pipe. We had often chaffed him for his devotion to his pipe, but we could scarcely do so after this. Whether or not he *enjoyed* smoking a pipe at 25,447 ft. is another matter. At all events, this offering to the Goddess Nicotine deserves to be recorded.

The view? It is difficult to render any account of it. We were too far above the world. Our gaze passed almost contemptuously over mighty range upon mighty range, to seek repose in the violet hazes of illimitable horizons. Huge clouds, sun-crested above, purple-shadowed below, stood out from the valleys, but their topmost turrets could not attain to our level. The breeze fanning us was deathly cold, the silence and sense of isolation almost terrible. There were no green valleys to be seen, all about us were peaks of black rock and glaring ice and snow, frozen outposts of the infinite. Thousands of feet beneath curved the glacier flowing south-westwards of Kamet, ribbed and girded with moraines like some monstrous dragon crawling from one cloudy cavern to

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another. Our sole link with the world was the camp we had left, now a mere blob on the snow of Meade's Col. Perhaps our friends there were regarding us. We rose to our feet, waved ice-axes, and let out a gasping shout. But our voices sounded pitifully weak through the thin air, and there came no response from the dotted tents.

In the far south, anvil-shaped plumes of coppery nimbus stood out from the foothills. Nanda Devi was buried in clouds and there was naught to challenge Kamet with the exception of Gurla Mandhata's glorious *massif*, 110 miles away. I have a dim recollection of a range on the extreme north-western horizon. Was it the eastern wing of the Karakoram? If so, it was 280 miles distant. Only in the north was relief to be found from a savage mountain world: there, barren hills, streaked untidily in snow, fell away into the golden plains of Tibet, tessellated with blue cloud shadows.

It was 5 p.m., time was vital; in less than three hours we should be overtaken by night. We rose wearily and stiffly to our feet, and tramped back along the summit ridge.

When we came to the point where we had gained the ridge we halted a few instants. At our feet we could see the East Kamet Glacier curving in a serene arc through its gorge of peaks. I looked for Camp Two, but could not distinguish



it. My vision swept upwards and over the ranges to the cloud-girdled south, where tall cumulus clouds passed, like ethereal ghosts, along the foothills of the Himalaya. The declining sun caressed us in its kindly glow.

We grasped our ice-axes in a firmer grip, and one by one stepped from the ridge. Next instant the shadow of Kamet's northern face had engulfed us.

Now that the job was done, we began to realize how tired we were. It is at such times of mountaineering anticlimax that accidents occur. The oncoming of night, cold, fatigue and desire to return as quickly as possible to the comparative comfort of Camp Five all combined to tempt us to rush down the upper slope. To have done so would have been mountaineering folly of the most elementary character. Steadiness was imperative; impatience had to be curbed. We progressed slowly, rope length by rope length. How slow it was! Impatience and resignation flared up alternately. It seemed as though we were doomed for ever to cling and crawl like snails to this snowy flank of Kamet. We descended in two parties, as on the ascent, but found it quicker to take separate lines rather than for both parties to descend the upward track, even though occasional step-cutting was necessary. Yet, if progress was slow, it was also certain and efficient. In drove

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the ice-axe into the snow until it struck the ice beneath, the rope was hitched around it, and down went the first man as quickly as possible, until the whole length of the rope was out, then he in turn anchored himself firmly, and took in the rope of the last man as he descended. In the Alps such tactics are seldom necessary even on the steepest snow-slope, but we were not in the Alps; we were tired men at a height of 25,000 ft., and a slip must be expected at any moment.

Fortunately, we did not find it essential to adhere to our uphill tracks owing to the improved quality of the snow, and by keeping more to the west were able to make a route that in its lower portion did not overlook the eastern precipice.

At the foot of the final slope Holdsworth and I halted to await Shipton and Lewa. The latter was moving very slowly and was obviously distressed. His face was greenish in hue, his eyes rigid and staring from exhaustion. He groaned out that he was in great pain, and pointed to his stomach. There was nothing we could do for him save to encourage him to continued effort and to relieve him of his load. As I lifted the rucksack with its 20 lbs or more of film apparatus, I was forcibly reminded of the amount of energy Nima Dorje and Lewa had expended getting it to the summit. Swinging it on to my back overbalanced me, and my tired legs almost col-

lapsed beneath me Yet, even at that moment, I said to myself that as the "damned thing" had been got to the summit, it somehow had to be got down again.<sup>1</sup>

On the ice-slopes below the boulder it was necessary to go carefully, for the rough surface of the ice was frozen so hard that an uncontrolled slide would have stripped a man's skin from him like paper.

Below the ice-slope we unroped. We had hoped to descend the lower slopes quickly and easily, but the soft snow had frozen into a vicious breakable crust, and the hard snow had frozen into icy boards. In some places our feet broke through the crust into the powdery snow beneath, and had to be dragged out again; in other places we slithered unpleasantly. Once or twice we tried to glissade, but this proved impossible on the breakable crust or dangerously uncontrollable on the harder and icier slopes

<sup>1</sup> To those explorers and mountaineers who may be contemplating a cinematograph record of their achievements I can only say that they must remember that, if their picture is to be a success with the film magnates and the film-going public, they must contrive to include incidents faked or authentic at least as revolting as those that delighted the audiences of the Colosseum at Rome The mentality that can tolerate pictures such as the Akron airship disaster when men were photographed falling to their death must be fed on lust and horror

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Slowly the Eastern Ibī Gamīn rose to the level of our vision. The camp below, a single blob when seen from the summit, resolved itself into the separate specks of our tents.

About 1,000 ft from the camp I decided to abandon the load of cinematograph apparatus, as its weight was delaying me, whilst the difficult snow made it an exhausting load to carry. At all events, it was left within range of the camp and could be recovered next day.

The cold became more severe, and the coldness of high altitudes is akin to the coldness of space itself.

The sun's last flare lit peak and snowfield. Night, a vast phalanx of purple, rushed up the sky. The slanting rays of the setting sun flooded the Tibetan plains, throwing into sharp relief numberless little crags and hills, that stood out like the fantastic buildings of some demon city.

Day drained quickly from the peaks. A cold pallor invested the world. And now we witnessed a strange spectacle. As the sun sank in the west another sun rose to rival it in the east, but a sun with rays, not of light, but of darkness, that radiated upward to the zenith of the evening sky. It was the parallel shadows of the peaks in the west cast by the real sun across the sky to such a distance, that they appeared to converge in a point above the eastern horizon.

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I do not remember feeling exhausted, yet I do remember that my knees were so curiously weak that a stumble in the crusted snow or a slither on the hard crust was difficult to correct without falling

Figures detached themselves from the camp beneath and came slowly through the dusk to meet us. A few minutes later I was grasping Birnie's hand and drinking hot liquid from a vacuum flask which he had thoughtfully brought with him. A glowing warmth spread through my tired limbs; a profound contentment permeated my whole being. A hundred yards more and the tents of Camp Five loomed up before us. The afterglow of a cloudless sunset saw us stumbling into camp.

We had not escaped scatheless. Intense cold during the descent had wreaked its will upon us. Poor Lewa was so exhausted that he could scarcely stagger. The removal of his boots and stockings revealed feet frozen and immovable, the whiteness of which was already changing to a dark purple. Men were immediately set to work to try to restore their circulation, but though they massaged for an hour or more his feet were far beyond the initial stages of frostbite, and circulation would not return. Holdsworth's right big toe was also frostbitten and Shipton's toe-tips were slightly affected. I was the only one to escape.

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and I attribute my immunity, not to an exceptionally good circulation, but to the fact that when mountaineering and skiing in the Alps I have made it my invariable practice to keep my toes moving in my boots by bunching them up and straightening them out at periodical intervals throughout a cold day. This had become so much of a habit that, though I cannot remember doing so, I feel certain that I kept it up on Kamet.

Supper went down well that night, although we were too tired to eat much. Tinned beans and tinned fruit, followed by a jorum of hot rum, set us in a warm glow that lasted throughout a cold night. For some time Shipton and I lay cosily side by side in our sleeping-bags, recalling the events of the day. Already they seemed a past chapter of life, and, as drowsiness gradually overcame me, they receded farther and farther into the forgotten. Quietness fell upon the camp. In the south, lightning winked and glimmered ceaselessly over the foothills.

F S SMYTHE—*Kamet Conquered*



## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

### *Rounding the Horn*

REX CLEMENTS tells us that it was much reading of *Robinson Crusoe* that fired his imagination for the sea. He was, of course, a boy in whom the spirit of adventure ran strongly, the wonder of far lands, the beauty of white-winged ships and the thrill of strange and surprising experiences pulled him irresistibly. Strong and wise enough to follow his own bent, he persuaded his family to allow him to become a sailor. In 1903 he joined the barque *Arethusa* as an apprentice. His book, *A Gipsy of the Horn*, is an account of the trip round the world that he made in her.

Clements had the gay and gallant spirit of the true adventurer. The greater the risk, the happier is he. In his graphic and vivid description of Rounding the Horn, that most dreaded of passages, it is clear that the fury of the storm is music to his ears, the nearness of death life to him.

### *A Blizzard in the Alps*

HILAIRE BELLOC was educated in England and left school to serve as a driver in the 8th Regiment of French Artillery.

He is famous as an essayist and has written many charming travel books as well as historical works, biographies and poems. The *Path to Rome* was published in 1902. It describes a journey he made on foot from Toul to Rome. He determined to walk across Europe by the shortest route and to cross the rivers and moun-



tains that barred his way. This adventurous enterprise took him high up into the Alps, where he encountered the blizzard which he here describes

### *Strange Nights on the Veld*

KINGSLEY FAIRBRIDGE was a boy adventurer. He was a South African, born in Grahamstown in 1885. When he was eleven, his father, who was a Government Surveyor, was sent to Southern Rhodesia and he accompanied him. For the next two years he lived the sort of life of freedom and adventure of which many boys dream. He was not thirteen when the events he narrates here happened to him.

Later he went to Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar, where he developed his scheme for Child Emigration. He knew that there were many orphans and poor children who would never have a chance in England. He knew, too, that most boys are naturally adventurous. He, therefore, believed that if he could take parties of boys out to the colonies and train them, they would come to love the life as he did and would develop into the best type of settler.

He was doing this fine work in Western Australia when he died at the age of twenty-nine.

### *Perils in the Andes*

A. F. TSCHIFFELY was born in Switzerland in 1895. For some years he was a master at various Preparatory Schools in England, and then was on the staff of the largest English-American school in the Argentine. He made several long trips on horseback through the Argentine and Uruguayan pampas and finally decided to see the Americas fully by riding from Buenos Aires to Washington. This journey of 10,000 miles took him two and a half years to accomplish. His route took him

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north from Argentina, over cold barren 16,000 feet ranges; through steamy jungles, across the Isthmus of Panama, up through central America and Mexico and so to the United States

The acknowledged purpose of the journey was to prove the qualities of the Argentine Creole horse, and this it certainly did, for Mr. Tschiffely had with him the same two horses of this breed when he rode into Washington as when he had ridden out of Buenos Aires

But the journey did more than that. It certainly proved also the qualities of Mr. Tschiffely himself. For the amazing feature of this adventure is that Mr. Tschiffely travelled alone. And everyone knows how much easier it is to be brave with a comrade at one's side

### *The End of the Boat Journey*

This extract is taken from SIR ERNEST SHACKLETON'S book, *South*. In this he records the unsuccessful attempt made by the expedition, which he led in 1914, to cross the South Polar continent from sea to sea.

When his ship, the *Endurance*, was crushed in the ice, the expedition took to the boats and, after great hardships among the pack ice, finally landed on Elephant Island. In order to bring relief to the expedition before winter shut the seas, Shackleton undertook the hazards of a boat journey to the whaling stations on the coast of South Georgia. Accompanied by five men, he succeeded in making this voyage of 800 miles across tempestuous icy seas. The extract gives a vivid picture of the hardships and perils of this venture, and without intention makes clear the skill, strength and determination of the leader.

### *An Avalanche on Mount Everest*

Descriptions of the three Mount Everest expeditions

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of 1921, 1922 and 1924 were written by the people who actually took part in them. In *The Epic of Mount Everest*, SIR FRANCIS YOUNGHUSBAND, KCSI, KCIE, gives a condensed account of the three expeditions based on the original volumes. He shows how the first discovered a way to the summit, how the second experimented with oxygen and succeeded in reaching an altitude of 27,235 feet, and finally how Mallory and Irvine were "last seen going strong for the top".

The chapter here reprinted from *The Epic of Mount Everest* describes a tragedy that occurred during the second expedition, when a party of climbers found themselves trapped in the sliding snow of an avalanche. The reader also obtains an idea of the planning and preparation such an expedition involves and of the strain it was on the health of climbers.

### *We Escape*

MAJOR A J EVANS, Royal Flying Corps, was one of the most persistent of escapers of the Great War. His frequent disappointments, the hardships his attempts entailed, the punishments that followed his recaptures never daunted him, they seemed rather to strengthen his determination, stimulate his ingenuity and whet his appetite for further attempts.

His book, *The Escaping Club*, is a stirring story of his many attempts to escape from the Germans and, after his second capture, from the Turks. The extract *We Escape* tells of the beginning and end of his last and successful attempt from Germany.

### *A Bush Fire*

SIR PERCY FITZPATRICK was born in Ireland and went to the Transvaal in 1884. He travelled extensively and was well known in South Africa. From 1910 to 1920 he was a member of Union Parliament.

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There was no need for Sir Percy to look for adventure—it found him, for his great interest and real life was big game hunting. The unnerving experiences and narrow escapes that he had, make his book *Jock of the Bushveld* fine reading. But what makes it even finer is the life-story of his dog, Jock, which is its main theme. Although Jock was not a dog one could afford to keep in England, no one can read of his courage, intelligence and loyalty without warming towards him.

The chapter from *Jock of the Bushveld* printed here describes the most dreaded of dangers that can threaten both hunter and game, the roaring horror of a bush fire.

### *The Last March*

CAPTAIN ROBERT FALCON SCOTT, Royal Navy, had already led one expedition to the Antarctic when in 1910 he accepted command of the expedition that sailed in the *Terra Nova*. He was accompanied by a distinguished band of explorers and scientists, for the objects of the expedition were to bring back more comprehensive knowledge of the Antarctic sub-continent as well as, if possible, to reach the South Pole.

The story of the journey to the Pole by Captain Scott and his few comrades, of their bitter disappointment when they found Amundsen had forestalled them and of their heroic but unsuccessful struggle to return to their base, has been retold many times. Captain Scott's own account of his "Last March" was written in his journals found by the side of the bodies of his comrades and himself. It is a plain tale of the most glorious of failures, but it reveals a record of uncomplaining resignation and noble courage that must inspire all who read it.

### *A Spinster among Cannibals*

STEPHEN GWYNN'S *Life of Mary Kingsley* is the story of a great adventurer and a noble woman.

## REAL ADVENTURE

Mary Kingsley, who was born in 1862, was the niece of Charles Kingsley, the novelist. Although bold, adventurous blood was in her veins, her childhood was very quiet, spent in her home and garden with the company of old, odd books. Up to the age of thirty, in fact, she was little more than a companion for her mother, either in London or Cambridge.

But in 1892 both her mother and father died. Her attachment to her father was very strong, and she determined to carry on the work he had been doing in investigating early religion and law. To do this it was necessary to go to the West Coast of Africa.

The West Coast in the nineties had a sinister reputation, its climate was deadly, the natives were still savages, and the white population, almost exclusively male, was decidedly "rough." Into this world came Mary Kingsley in her black dress, carrying her umbrella. Amazing as it may seem, she became greatly liked and respected by the rough traders.

With short breaks, she spent the next eight years on the West Coast, exploring its waterways and forests and living among its peoples. There is little doubt her outspoken opinions did much to improve the treatment of the natives.

Her courage was wonderful; she was completely without fear. The extract from Stephen Gwynn's book shows this, as it does her splendid sense of humour.

She died from fever in 1900 while nursing Boer prisoners of war in South Africa.

### *Kamet Conquered*

FRANCIS SYDNEY SMYTHE was trained as an electrical engineer. He joined the R.A.F. in 1927 and took part in the Kangchenjunga and Mount Kamet expeditions, both of which he has described in his published books.

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

In the Foreword which he has written to Mr Smythe's book *Kamet Conquered*, Sir Francis Younghusband asks why it is that man, in order to stand for a bare half-hour on a mountain summit, will endure incredible hardships, run most fearsome risks and hazard even his own life. He answers the question by saying it is the power the mountain has to force the best out of man, to compel him to be his fittest in body, alertest in mind and firmest in soul. The chapter entitled *Kamet Conquered*, which recounts the final stage of the ascent, amply proves how just are these observations.